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HISTORY OF ENGLAND

IN THE

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HISTORY OF ENGLAND

IN

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE REBELLION.

THE United Irish Society had, as we have seen, passed through several distinct phases since its foundation at Belfast in October 1791. It was originally a perfectly legal society consisting of men who pledged themselves 'in the presence of God' to use all their influence to obtain 'an impartial and adequate representation of the Irish nation in Parliament,' and, as a means to this end, to endeavour to secure the co-operation of Irishmen of all religious persuasions; and although some of its leaders undoubtedly aimed from the first at separation, the real objects of many, and the ostensible objects of all, were merely Catholic emancipation and parliamentary reform. After the suppression of the society in 1794 it had been reconstructed on a new basis, and became distinctly treasonable. An oath was substituted for the original test, and it comprised an obligation to secrecy and fidelity. The mention of Parliament in the declaration of aims was suppressed; a very elaborate organisation was created consisting of a hierarchy of committees, each committee except the lowest being formed by election from the subordinate sections; and the whole was directed by a General Executive Directory of five members, elected by ballot from the Provincial Directories, and sitting in Dublin. In 1795 the society appears

to have been almost confined to Ulster and to Dublin. In 1796 it spread more widely through Leinster. In 1797 it extended over the greater part of that province, had become very powerful in Munster, and had gained some slight footing in Connaught. At the close of 1796 and in the beginning of 1797 a military organisation was grafted on it, and it became a main object to create, arm, and discipline regiments for a rebellion.

The organisation on paper appeared very perfect, but its real was very different from its apparent strength, and it was enormously weakened by want of subordination, earnestness, discipline, arms, and military skill. The executive and higher committees had not, in fact, the absolute power assigned to them in the constitution of the body, and it is probable that each committee acted with great independence. Of the multitude who had joined the society, only a few were genuine political fanatics. Many had taken the oath, coerced by the intimidation, or persuaded by the example of their neighbours; many others had done so through the belief that the United Irish body were likely to govern Ireland, through hopes that they would gain something in a confiscation of land, or through simple fear of the Orangemen, against whom the great rival organisation was supposed to be the chief protection. Such men were hardly likely to make serious sacrifices for political ends. But still the fact remains that the bulk of the peasantry in three provinces in Ireland, were in the beginning of 1798 enlisted in a conspiracy which was daily extending, and were looking forward to an immediate rebellion in conjunction with a French invasion. The manufacture, plunder, and concealment of arms, the constant attempts to seduce the soldiers and yeomen, the nightly drills, the great organised assemblies under the pretext of potato diggings, the frequent murder of magistrates, soldiers, and informers, abundantly showed the seriousness of the situation.

In February 1798—before the declaration of martial law, before the establishment of free quarters—the executive body computed that half a million of persons had been sworn into the society, and that more than 280,000 of them could be counted on to appear in the field. In a paper drawn up by Lord Edward Fitzgerald shortly before his arrest, it was calculated that the number of armed men enlisted was 279,896. Of these men,

110,990 were in Ulster, 100,634 in Munster, and 68,272 in Leinster. From Connaught no returns appear to have come in.[1]

A few words may be said about the members of the Supreme Executive. At the beginning of 1798 they appear to have been Thomas Addis Emmet, Arthur O'Connor, William James McNevin, Oliver Bond, and Richard McCormick. The last had been formerly Secretary of the Catholic Committee, and with McNevin he represented the Catholic element in the Directory. He was a warm friend of Tone, and he both knew and sanctioned Tone's first application for French assistance. He belonged, however, to the section of the Directory who were opposed to a rebellion before the arrival of the French, and he appears to have been much alarmed by the crimes and violence into which the movement had degenerated. In February 1798 he told Reynolds that he had ventured, at a provincial meeting in that month, to recommend less violent measures, and that he had been attacked in such a manner that he believed his life to be in danger, and had resolved to realise his property and escape from Ireland.[2] He fulfilled his intention, fled from Ireland in March, and did not return till long after the rebellion.[3] McNevin, as we have seen, had gone on a mission to France, but he had returned in October 1797, and had reported to the Irish Directory that they might fully rely on French succour,[4] and, like McCormick, he desired that all rebellion should be prevented till that succour arrived. Oliver Bond was a rich woollen draper, the son of a Dissenting minister in Donegal. He had been imprisoned for his political conduct as early as 1793, and had borne a prominent part in the conspiracy from its commencement. He asserted on his examination by the Committee of the House of Lords, that though he had been elected to the supreme executive body, he had 'declined to act officially,' but he was in the closest confidence of the leaders of the movement, and he is said to have filled the important post of treasurer.[5]

Emmet and Arthur O'Connor were perhaps abler, they were certainly more conspicuous men than their colleagues, and the

[1] See Madden's *United Irishmen*, i. 282-284, and also a paper in the Record Office, dated Feb. 26, 1798.

[2] *Life of Thomas Reynolds*, by his son, i. 197.

[3] Compare Tone's *Life*, i. 126, 127; Madden, iii. 48, 335.

[4] *Report of the Secret Committee of the House of Lords*, p. 12.

[5] This was stated both by McNally (Sept. 27, 1797) and by Turner.

first is one of the very few really interesting figures connected with the rebellion. He was a respectable lawyer, an excellent writer, a very honest and disinterested man, and he had certainly not embarked in treason either through motives of selfish ambition or through any mere love of adventure and excitement. He became a United Irishman in order to obtain a radical parliamentary reform and Catholic emancipation; he found that these things were never likely to be attained except by force, and he at last succeeded in persuading himself that if Ireland were only detached from England she would soar to an unprecedented height of prosperity.[1] Nature had intended him much more for the life of a man of letters than for the scenes in which he was now engaged, and his type is one which is often found in the earlier stages of a rebellion, but is usually discarded, or eclipsed in blood, long before the struggle has run its course. His writings and his examination before the Privy Council are singularly interesting and instructive as showing the process by which a humane, honourable, and scrupulous man could become the supporter of a movement which was the parent of so many crimes. Grattan knew Emmet slightly and admitted his integrity, but he had a profound contempt for his political understanding. He described him, somewhat unceremoniously, as a quack in politics who despised experience, set up his own crude notions as settled rules, and looked upon elections and representation as if they were operations of nature rather than the work of art. Anyone, Grattan maintained, who could bring himself to believe that a country like Ireland, in which the people were so destitute that one-third of them were exempted from the payment of hearth money on account of their poverty, could be safely or tolerably governed with annual parliaments elected by universal suffrage, must be politically mad, and had forfeited all right to be considered in Irish politics. Emmet afterwards rose to considerable distinction in America and became Attorney-General of New York. Grattan—perhaps unjustly—thought his success much beyond his talents, and such as he would never have attained if he had remained at home.[2]

[1] See the passage in his examination, McNevin's *Pieces of Irish History*, pp. 216, 217.

[2] See a curious conversation of Grattan in his *Life*, iv. 360, 361. Grattan acutely added: 'England

Arthur O'Connor was of a very different type. He was a man of wealth and high social position; a nephew of Lord Longueville; a member of a family remarkable for its violence, its eccentricities, and its domestic quarrels. He had some parliamentary standing, some shining talents, boundless courage and enterprise, and he risked and sacrificed for his opinions more than most of his colleagues. He was, however, rash, obstinate and arrogant, very incapable of waiving his personal pretensions for a public end, and very destitute of most of the higher qualities of a real leader of men. In one of his latest writings he mentions that early in life he had been deeply impressed by reading in Leland's 'History of Ireland' a description of the Irish policy advocated by some of the counsellors of Elizabeth. 'Should we exert ourselves,' they had said, 'in reducing this country to order and civility, it must acquire power, consequence, and riches. The inhabitants will be thus alienated from England; they will cast themselves into the arms of some foreign power, or perhaps erect themselves into an independent and separate state. Let us rather connive at their disorder; for a weak and disordered people never can attempt to detach themselves from the crown of England.'[1] This passage, O'Connor said, appeared to him to furnish the key-note explaining the English policy of his own day, and he declared that it was this conviction that chiefly shaped the political conduct of his life.[2] He lived to extreme old age; he became a general in the French service, and has left some writings which throw much curious light on his character and on his times. Like several of the early advocates of Catholic emancipation, he was utterly without sympathy for the Catholic creed. Few men, indeed, can have had a greater contempt for priests and for what they teach, and in his last work he expressed his unmingled detestation of O'Connell, and of the movement which had placed the guidance of popular politics in Ireland under the direction of an ignorant and low-born priesthood. In spite of his admiration for the French Revolution, he was in his tastes and temper essentially aristocratic, though he believed that the

should take care. She transports a great deal of hostile spirit to that quarter.'

[1] Leland, *History of Ireland*, ii. 291, 292.

[2] O'Connor's *Monopoly the Cause of all Evil*, iii. 541, 542.

Irish gentry by appealing to the Irish people could break the ascendency which English influence had hitherto exercised on the counsels of the nation, and put an end to the religious and class divisions by which that ascendency had been chiefly maintained.

Several other men were at this time active in guiding the conspiracy, most of them being in the Provincial Directory of Leinster. The most important was Lord Edward Fitzgerald, who was chiefly entrusted with the military organisation and who was intended to be commander-in-chief, though it is doubtful whether he was ever formally elected to the Supreme Executive. The co-operation of a member of the first family of the Protestant aristocracy was of no small advantage to the conspiracy in a country where the genuine popular feeling, amid all its aberrations, has always shown itself curiously aristocratic, and where the first instinct of the people when embarking in democratic and revolutionary movements has usually been to find some one of good family and position to place at their head. Lord Edward's very transparent character has been already described. No one could doubt his courage, his energy, his intense enthusiasm, or his perfect disinterestedness, and, as he had been a captain in the army and had seen active service, he had some military knowledge, but no competent judge appears to have discovered in him any real superiority of intellect.

The question of an immediate rising independently of the French, had been much discussed in Ulster after the proclamation of General Lake in May 1797, and it was again agitated in the first weeks of 1798. Arthur O'Connor, as we have seen, had formerly maintained that a French landing ought to precede any rising in Ireland, but he now believed the organisation to have become sufficiently powerful for independent action, and in conjunction with Fitzgerald he strongly advocated it. The dispute ran very high, and it made O'Connor a bitter enemy of Emmet, whom he accused, very unjustly, of cowardice. The party of Emmet, however, which desired to postpone the explosion till the arrival of the French, again prevailed, but it prevailed only through the belief that a French invasion was imminent. Lewins and McNevin in 1797 had been instructed to ask only for 10,000 French troops, but for a very large

quantity of arms.[1] It was calculated that such assistance would be amply sufficient to overthrow the English power in Ireland without bringing any danger of a French domination. Promises of support had more than once come from France, and although the battle of Camperdown had thrown a great damp on the hopes of the conspirators, they were revived by new assurances, and especially by a message which was received at the beginning of 1798 promising that French assistance would arrive in Ireland in April, or at the latest in the beginning of May.[2] The English Government on their side received secret intelligence in February and March of extensive preparations that were making at Dunkirk, Havre, Honfleur, and Calais.[3]

The invasion was eagerly looked forward to. A new military committee was appointed at Dublin in February for the express purpose of preparing a plan of co-operation with the French, and instructions were furnished to the adjutant-generals of the conspiracy to collect full information about the state of the United Irish regiments within their districts; about the roads, rivers, and bridges; the capacities of the towns and villages to receive troops, and the strength and movements of the enemy.[4] Arthur O'Connor determined to go to France to arrange a combined movement, but he was arrested at Margate on February 28, in company with a priest named O'Coigly or Quigley, an English agitator named Binns, and two other men who appear to have been his servants. McNally, in commenting upon this arrest, significantly observed that it would have very little effect upon the conspiracy, and that McCormick, McNevin, Drennan, and other leading Irishmen considered O'Connor so impetuous that they were not sorry to have him out of the way.[5]

It has often been asked why the Irish Government, with all the information at its disposal, and at a time when the Habeas Corpus Act was suspended, did not arrest the leading members

[1] McNevin, pp. 190, 195.

[2] See *Report of the Secret Committee*, Appendix, pp. cvii, cx, cxv, cxxi, cxxii.

[3] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, i. 165–168.

[4] See *Report of the Secret Committee*.

[5] J. W., March 9, 1798. McNally had informed the Government as early as Jan. 11 that the invasion was to take place in April, that O'Connor had left Ireland, to the great satisfaction of his colleagues, and that his destination was France.

of the conspiracy before it attained its height. In truth, however, the information they possessed was less full than has been supposed. Most of the schemes of the United Irishmen were communicated to them, and they had a general knowledge of the leading members of the conspiracy, but they appear to have known little about the Supreme Executive, and they were conscious that they could produce no evidence against the leaders which was the least likely to lead to a conviction. From the June of 1797 they had received from an informer at Saintfield, in the county of Down, regular reports of county and provincial meetings of the United Irishmen in Ulster.[1] In the same month McNally had informed them that there was a secret directory of about six members at the head of the United Irishmen.[2] In September and October he told them that Bond was the treasurer of the conspiracy; that the chief management was now transferred from Belfast to Dublin and confined to a very few; that Keogh, McCormick, Lord Edward Fitzgerald, Arthur O'Connor, Sweetman, Dixon, Chambers, Emmet, Bond, and Jackson were in the secret, but that he was convinced that even their part in the conspiracy was only a secondary one.[3] Some full and very valuable additional information was soon after sent by Turner from Hamburg.[4] But there was never any question of McNally appearing as a witness, and neither Turner nor the Saintfield informer would consent to do so.

From the beginning of 1798, however, it was the urgent desire of the Irish Government to arrest the conspirators. On January 8, Camden wrote acknowledging the information of Turner, and expressing his great regret that the author could not be induced to come forward as a witness, and that the other secret information which had been received from Lord Grenville's office could not be produced.[5] A month later he informed Portland that the confidential friends of the Government in Ireland, after deliberating on the information from Hamburg, had unanimously agreed that it was very advisable to arrest at once the leaders of the conspiracy, even though it was probable that no sufficient evidence could be produced to justify a trial.

[1] *Report of the Secret Committee*, Appendix No. xiv.
[2] J. W., June 21, 1797.
[3] Ibid. Sept. 27, Oct. 2, 1797.
[4] J. Richardson to the Marquis of Downshire, Nov. 19, 1797 (R.O.).
[5] Camden to Portland, Jan. 8, 1798.

Such an arrest, they contended, would dislocate the conspiracy, and if it produced an insurrection in some parts of the kingdom, 'this event might not be unpropitious, as it would be more in our power to crush it than if such event happened when the enemy were off the coast.' Portland, however, answered that such a policy would be very rash and dangerous, and he positively forbade it.[1] Camden wrote that no reward ought to be withheld from Turner if he would come forward and give evidence, but it was answered that no earthly consideration would induce him to go to Ireland,[2] and he soon after, without informing the Government, returned to the Continent. But the Irish Government now felt so strongly the necessity of speedily breaking the organisation, that they even contemplated the extreme measure of proceeding against the conspirators by an Act of attainder.[3]

At last, however, they succeeded in obtaining the evidence they required. Their informant was a Catholic gentleman, named Thomas Reynolds. He was a young man of twenty-seven who had been a silk merchant, but had retired from business, and had purchased an estate in the county of Kildare. He was brother-in-law of Wolfe Tone, and a neighbour and distant connection of Lord Edward Fitzgerald. He had early taken a warm interest in the question of Catholic emancipation. He had been chosen as one of the representatives of Dublin in the Catholic Convention in 1792, but had retired from that body with Lord Fingall, and he had joined the United Irishmen in the beginning of 1797. According to his own account, he did so for the sole purpose of assisting the ostensible objects of the association, and was very reluctantly induced by his connection, Lord Edward, to accept a more prominent part. He was made colonel,

[1] See Camden to Portland, Feb. 8, 1798 (most secret), and the reply of Portland.

[2] Camden to Portland, March 1; Portland to Camden, March 7, 1798.

[3] Thus Cooke wrote to Lord Auckland on March 19: 'I fear we cannot convict *legally* our prisoners, though we have evidence upon evidence; but they *must* be punished, or the country is gone. Attainder if ever is justifiable.' Four days later Clare wrote to the same correspondent: 'Unless we can summon resolution to take a very decided step and to attaint the conspirators by Act of Parliament, I have no hope of bringing them to justice. It is not possible to prevail with men who give secret information to come forward in a court of justice; and if these villains escape with a temporary imprisonment only, there will be no possibility of living in Ireland.' (*Auckland Correspondence*, iii. 393, 394.) Camden had written to Portland on the 11th that the head committee must be arrested, even if it were found impossible to seize their papers.

treasurer of the province, and as such, member of the Executive of Leinster. He then heard that a rebellion was imminent, and it is stated that he learnt that the first step to be taken to insure success was to deprive the Executive Government, if necessary by assassination, of about eighty individuals, that the list was shown him, and that it comprised many of the first persons in Ireland, and among them some of his own relations.[1] Very reluctantly, and after great hesitation, he resolved to defeat the plan, and confided to an old loyalist friend that on the 12th of March the whole Provincial Directory of Leinster would meet at the house of Oliver Bond to prepare an insurrection. He added that he neither sought nor would accept honour or reward, but he made, according to his own account, four stipulations: he was himself never to be prosecuted as a United Irishman; he was not to be forced to prosecute any other person as a United Irishman; and the part he had taken in giving the information was to be concealed. As, however, he would probably, in spite of all precautions, be obliged to fly from Ireland in order to escape assassination, and as his property consisted chiefly of houses and lands, on which it was difficult to raise money in those distracted times, he demanded a sum of 500*l.* to enable him to quit the country.

Whether this was a true and complete account of his motives, it is impossible to say. Up to the date on which he gave evidence to the Government, Reynolds appears to have been looked upon by his party as a man whose character and position entitled him to such a measure of confidence and respect that they were most anxious to secure his services, and to place him in prominent and difficult positions. After he had given information they at once discovered that he was a monster in human form, a perfect prodigy of villany. He had poisoned his mother. He had poisoned his mother-in-law. His whole life had been a tissue of the basest frauds. The information he gave the Government was due to the most sordid motives. The blow, however, which he had rendered possible was completely successful, and

[1] This rests on the authority of Reynolds's son (*Life of Reynolds*, i. 187, 188), who states that the list was to have been produced at the trial of Cummins, from whom Reynolds received it, had not the confession of the United Irishmen induced the Government to desist from further prosecutions. It does not appear to have been ever stated by Reynolds in court.

on March 12 fifteen of the leaders of the United Irishmen forming the Leinster Provincial Committee were arrested in the house of Bond and their papers seized. Emmet, Sweetman, Jackson, and McNevin, who were not included in the party at Bond's, were taken almost at the same time.

The conspiracy was thus suddenly, and at a most critical moment, at once deprived of its most important leaders; but though a warrant was out against Lord Edward Fitzgerald, he was still at large. There is little doubt that his escape was due to Reynolds, who might easily, if he had chosen, have placed him in the hands of the Government. On the 11th, the day before the arrest, he had an interview with Fitzgerald, and he succeeded in so alarming him by accounts of information in the hands of the Government, as to induce him to abstain from the meeting at Bond's. On the 14th and 15th Reynolds had again secret interviews with Fitzgerald, and on the 16th with his wife, and he discussed with them the methods of concealment, and is stated even to have lent them the money they required for a hasty flight. His conduct at this time towards Fitzgerald shows real friendship, and of all the many slanders with which Reynolds was pursued none is more grotesquely false than that which described him as the betrayer of Lord Edward. Nor does he appear as yet to have had the smallest desire to bring his other colleagues to punishment, though he was anxious to defeat their designs and to extricate himself from the conspiracy. With the latter object he supported a proposal, which was made immediately after the arrest, for reforming the Provincial Directory, which would have excluded him from that body, and his only wish appears to have been to return to his country house, and, having prevented the effusion of torrents of blood, to take no further part in politics.

He soon found, however, that a neutral position was impossible. As he anticipated, he was suspected, and, as he anticipated also, the murderers were soon on his track. Three separate attempts seem to have been made to assassinate him, but they were baffled by his conspicuous courage and self-possession. On the other hand, the Government gave him no protection. His county was placed under martial law, he was himself a suspected man, and the officers in command knew nothing of the service he had secretly rendered. A large party of dra-

goons and militia under Captain Erskine were sent to live on free quarters at Kilkea Castle. Their proceedings there seem to be a fair sample of the military licence that was then prevailing. The floors and wainscoting were torn up, the walls were pierced in many places in search for arms, the staircases and furniture were broken with wanton violence, and the whole interior of the castle was reduced to ruin. The loss was estimated by Reynolds at several thousands of pounds. His troubles were not yet over. A number of United Irishmen, probably hoping to ruin him and discredit his testimony, now informed against him, and he was arrested as a United Irishman and brought to Dublin for trial.

'A Mr. Reynolds,' wrote Camden to Portland, 'was the person who gave Government the information upon which the committee at Oliver Bond's was taken. This person was only guessed at, although a note found upon Bond had convinced many persons that he was the man. After that capture he went into the county of Kildare, and has scarcely given us any information since.' Camden doubted whether this was through fear of his old colleagues who suspected him, or through a desire to return to their party, but thought that, most probably, he was waiting to see what course would be the most prudent. 'He has, however, been taken up,' continued the Lord Lieutenant, 'upon the most positive information against him, by those whom he commanded in a regiment which was formed.' When brought before the Council, he said that he was a protected person; they were obliged to concede this, and he then gave information on oath to the Government.[1]

The moment was very critical, and it was rendered still more so by the dangerous illness of Pelham, and especially by the dispute which had just broken out between Abercromby and the Irish Government. On March 30 the blow which was

[1] Camden to Portland, May 11, 1798. Ten days later Lord Clare wrote to Auckland: 'A man who had given us private information, on the express condition of never being desired to come forward publicly, was betrayed by some of his subalterns in the county of Kildare, and arrested in consequence by General Dundas, who commands in that district, without communication with Government, and sent up to Dublin in custody. In this dilemma the gentleman's scruples have vanished, and he will, I think, enable us to bring many of the leading traitors to justice, and at their head Lord Edward Fitzgerald.' (*Auckland Correspondence*, iii. 421.)

struck on the 12th was followed by the famous proclamation of martial law and free quarters, which was undoubtedly a proximate cause of the rebellion. Express orders were given to Abercromby to employ the military in the disturbed districts, and especially in Kildare, Tipperary, Limerick, Cork, the King's County, the Queen's County, and Kilkenny, without waiting for directions from the civil magistrates, for the purpose of crushing rebellion in every shape, and forcibly disarming the rebels. The officers were authorised to quarter troops wherever it might seem to them necessary, to press horses and carriages, to demand forage and provisions, to hold courts-martial for all offences, and to issue 'proclamations.' Special notices to the inhabitants of particular counties were now promulgated, summoning them to give up all arms and ammunition within ten days, and announcing that if there was reason to believe that this had not been fully done, the troops would be sent in large bodies to live at free quarters among them, and other very severe measures would be used to enforce obedience.[1]

This proclamation opened a scene of horrors hardly surpassed in the modern history of Europe. In order to form a just and sane judgment of it, we must bear clearly in mind the desperate condition of the country. There was no longer any serious hope of preventing a rebellion. There was abundant evidence that at this time tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of men were organised in a treasonable conspiracy, enrolled in regular regiments, with their officers, their arms, and their ammunition, and only waiting the arrival of the French fleet, which was expected in April, to burst into open rebellion. Papers were flying from cabin to cabin announcing that the deliverers would soon be on the sea; that the hour of struggle, of triumph, and of vengeance was at hand. All the best accounts that came to the Government represented rebellion as not only certain, but imminent. McNally repeatedly warned them that the only difference among the leaders was whether or not they should wait for the arrival of the French, and he wrote in the beginning of 1798 that it was the general opinion that in two months Ireland would be separated from England.[2] Another informant, two days before

[1] Plowden, ii. 676. Camden to Portland, March 30, 1798. *Report of the Secret Committee*, Appendix, pp. ccxcv, ccxcvi. *Castlereagh Correspondence*, i. 168, 169.

[2] J. W., Jan. 3, 1798.

the arrest at Bond's house, warned them that Lord Edward Fitzgerald had resolved to propose an immediate rising, and that, if not intercepted, it would certainly take place within four weeks.[1] 'The North,' wrote a third and very important informer, 'is now, more than at any former period, held out as an example to the other provinces. To the perfect state of organisation there is their apparent tranquillity owing.' 'Military organisation has been adopted in the city, and some battalions are already formed, and officers appointed.' Twelve men 'of the first military talent and experience' were said to be engaged, and assurances of immediate aid had come from the French Directory.[2]

Higgins, who, among his other occupations, seems to have done business as a land agent, mentions that he had been in the country endeavouring, without any success, to collect some rents. Several of the poorer kind of tenantry, he added, candidly declared that they never expected to see an agent among them again, for they had been promised that the lands were 'to be their own, and divided equally. It was by this kind of seduction that numberless of the ignorant and lower orders were drawn from their allegiance by better-informed traitors.'[3] Magistrates reported that when they licensed public-houses they were told that this would be the last time they would be asked to do so, and tithe proctors that there was a general belief that tithes would never again be paid.[4]

The expectation of revolution was universal, but the rising was not to take place till the arrival of the French. There was now, therefore, a short respite—an ominous and imperfect calm, broken by constant accounts of the murder of magistrates and informers, of attacks upon sentries, of nightly raids for arms, of which that on the town of Cahir was the most conspicuous and

[1] Information endorsed 'C., March 10, 1798.' This was, I believe, Reynolds.

[2] Anonymous letter, dated Stephen's Green, April 22, and endorsed 'Mag.' This was from Magan. Another informer, who professed to be on intimate terms with the leaders of the conspiracy, and to have access to all their plans, resolutions, and correspondence, corroborates the statement in the text that the apparent tranquillity of the North was only due to the perfection of its organisation. 'It was in the North,' he continued, 'that the spirit of rebellion took its birth. It is in the North it is fostered. It is there that it is brought to maturity. It is there, in fine, lie the hopes, the spring, the wealth, the force of the United Irishmen.' (Letter endorsed 'V. secret, March 27.')

[3] F. H., May 15, 1798.

[4] Musgrave.

the most audacious. Upon the use that was made of this short interval the result of the contest might depend.

No one who will honestly face this situation can doubt that it demanded extreme vigour—a vigour which would inevitably transcend the limits of ordinary law. One of the ablest of the rebels afterwards acknowledged, that up to the proclamation of March 30 the process of arming the people for rebellion went smoothly on, and that it was this proclamation and the measures that followed, that alone arrested it.[1] On the other hand, no one who knew the state of Ireland could doubt that such measures, when adopted, must lead to horrible abuses. Ireland was now wholly unlike what it had been at the outbreak of the French Revolution. The crimes and panics of the last few years, the fierce passions that had been aroused, and the tension of long-continued danger and suspense, had filled it with savage and inveterate hatreds, broken down all discipline in the army, set class against class, and creed against creed. When a half-disciplined yeomanry and militia, demoralised by a long course of licence and irritated by many outrages, came to live at free quarters upon a hostile peasantry, who regarded them as Orangemen, and who were taught that every Orangeman had sworn to exterminate the Catholics, it was not difficult to anticipate the result.

The burnings of houses which had been well known in the North were now carried on upon a yet larger scale in Leinster, and the free quarters formed a new and terrible feature in the system of military coercion. There is reason to believe that this system was adopted contrary to the general wishes of the Irish gentry,[2] and one of the principal of those in the Queen's County wrote a letter to Cooke clearly pointing out its evils. 'I have my fears,' he wrote, 'this plan will not answer the end. It will unavoidably involve in punishment the innocent with the guilty. The soldiers will find miserable means of living among those who are the robbers and defenders. Of course they will not, cannot be restrained from laying hold of the substance and property of farmers who are innocent and loyal. Indiscriminate punishment and much mischief must ensue.

[1] *Memoirs of Miles Byrne*, i. 31.

[2] 'The gentlemen seem averse to assist the military in the manner in which Sir Ralph means to dispose of them, viz. by living at free quarters upon the disaffected inhabitants.' (Camden to Portland, April 23, 1798.)

Surely, my dear Cooke, this is a more violent and coercive system than burning the houses of those who were known to be delinquents.'[1]

If Abercromby had continued in command, it is possible that the abuses resulting from this system might have been restrained, though they could not have been wholly prevented, but neither Lake nor the Irish Government appear to have made the smallest effort to check them. District after district was now proclaimed, and after the stated interval the soldiers descended like a flight of locusts upon it. They were quartered in the best of the houses of the suspected persons in proportion to the supposed means of the owners, and they lived as in an enemy's country. Many men were ruined by their exactions and their depredations. All the neighbouring houses were searched, and any house in which any weapon was found was immediately burnt. Many others were burnt because the owners, terror-stricken perhaps by the violence around them, had abandoned them, or because some of the innumerable seditious papers were found in them. One of the rebel leaders afterwards described how in one small corner of Wicklow in a single morning no less than fourteen houses were burnt by a single man.[2] Sometimes, after a period of coercion had failed to produce a surrender of arms, a proclamation was issued stating that the nightly patrols would for a time be withdrawn in order that the people might be able without fear to collect the arms and to bring them to an appointed place, and that if this was not done before a given date the whole district would be burnt. Great piles of arms came in this way into the possession of the Government, though the people sometimes showed their feelings by breaking them to pieces before they deposited them in the place that was assigned.[3]

This plan of disarmament appears to have been adopted in all the towns of the county of Kildare, and a few particular instances which are preserved will enable the reader to understand the manner in which it was worked. Thus the inhabitants of the town of Kildare had refused to give up the arms which the commanding officer was convinced they possessed, and they alleged that there were none in the town. General Walford at

[1] Charles Coote (Montrath) to Cooke, April 15, 1798.

[2] Holt's *Memoirs*, i. 20.

[3] *Leadbeater Papers*, i. 225, 226.

once called the inhabitants together, and announced to them on his honour that if they did not bring in their arms in twenty-four hours he would burn every house in the town, and he at the same time assured them that if they complied with his order they should have complete protection, and that not a single soldier would appear out of his barracks on that evening in order that the people should have the opportunity of collecting and depositing their arms without fear. The measure proved successful, and great quantities of arms were brought in.[1] From Athy in the same county Colonel Campbell wrote: 'In consequence of burning a few houses in this town and the neighbourhood, together with a little military discipline, we have got a number of pikes.'[2] In other cases the resistance was more obstinate. 'This last week,' wrote Lady Louisa Conolly to Mr. Ogilvie on May 21, 'was a most painful one to us. Maynooth, Kilcock, Leixlip, and Celbridge have had part of a Scotch regiment quartered at each place, living upon free quarters and every day threatening to burn the towns. I have spent days in entreaties and threats to give up the horrid pikes. Some houses burnt at Kilcock yesterday produced the effect. Maynooth held out yesterday, though some houses were burnt and some people punished. This morning the people of Leixlip are bringing in their arms. Celbridge as yet holds out, though five houses are now burning. Whether obstinacy or that they have them not I cannot say; . . . we have fortunately two most humane officers, that do not do more than is absolutely necessary from their orders.' 'I expect,' wrote Colonel Napier on the same day, 'on my return to find Celbridge and Maynooth in ashes, as that was the "order of the day."'[3]

Horrible abuses and horrible sufferings inevitably accompanied these things. Many who resisted, and not a few it is said who did not resist, were shot dead on their thresholds, while countless families were deprived of all they possessed and were driven homeless into the world. Farm horses were seized and carried away. Stores of provisions were broken into and shamefully wasted or destroyed, and acts of simple robbery and purely wanton violence were of daily occurrence.

[1] *Saunders's Newsletter*, May 25, 1798.

[2] Col. Campbell, May 14 (I.S.P.O.).

[3] Moore's *Life of Lord Edward Fitzgerald*, ii. 100, 103.

Torture was at the same time systematically employed to discover arms. Great multitudes were flogged till they almost fainted; picketed and half strangled to extort confessions. Blacksmiths were the special objects of suspicion and vengeance, and many of them were scourged almost to death in the streets of the villages in order to compel them to state what pikes they had made, and to reveal the persons to whom they had consigned them.[1]

It had been the habit of the republican party in Ireland, as in France, to cut short their hair as a distinctive sign, and the 'croppies,' as they were termed, were an obvious mark for military violence. The torture of these men soon became a popular amusement among the soldiers. Some soldiers of the North Cork Militia are said to have invented the pitched cap of linen or thick brown paper, which was fastened with burning pitch to the victim's head and could not be torn off without tearing out the hair or lacerating the skin. One soldier obtained a special reputation by varying the torture. He was accustomed to cut the hair of the victims still shorter, to rub into it moistened gunpowder and then to set it on fire. Sometimes also an ear or a portion of an ear was cut off.

All this went on in the proclaimed districts without interference and without restraint. In the great majority of cases no doubt the sufferers were justly suspected of being enrolled in a treasonable conspiracy and of possessing concealed arms. But it was constantly asserted, and it is in the highest degree probable, that in the complete military licence that prevailed, many of the victims were perfectly innocent. Men were acting under the blinding influence of panic and widespread suspicions, and often under influences that were still more pernicious. In a country where every informer was at once marked out for assassination, secret information naturally and necessarily played a great part, and it gave terrible opportunities for the gratification of private cupidities and private malice. Every Irish country district is sure to be full of quarrels about leases and boundaries and trespasses, quarrels between landlords and tenants, between competing tenants, between debtors and creditors, between

[1] See the graphic description in the *Leadbeater Papers*, i. 226, 227; Hay's *Hist. of the Rebellion in Wexford*, p. 64.

farmers and labourers. The burning of houses and the flogging of individuals were very often not the result of any judicial or quasi-judicial investigation, or even of the decision of an experienced and superior officer. Young subalterns, sergeants of militia, common soldiers ordered and perpetrated these things, and it is but too probable that they often acted on the whispered suggestion of a private enemy.[1] If some men cut their hair short to attest their republican sentiments, others did so for simple convenience, while the hair of others was cut short by the United Irishmen for the express purpose of exposing them to the vengeance of the soldiers.[2] Quakers, who had scruples about applying for military protection, often fell under suspicion, though they were among the most orderly and peaceful inhabitants of the country.[3]

Outrages on women were very common. Peasant girls had often thrown themselves enthusiastically into the United Irish movement, and attested their sentiments by their green ribbons, while many others who knew or cared nothing about politics wore something green in their dress. Every person who did so was tolerably sure to be exposed to insults which planted far and wide, among a peasantry peculiarly susceptible on such matters, the seeds of deadly, enduring hatred.[4] Other outrages were unconnected with any real or pretended political cause, and were such as inevitably occur when an undisciplined soldiery are quartered among a hostile population. Dr. Dickson, the Protestant Bishop of Down, told Lord Holland how 'he had seen families returning peaceably from mass assailed without provocation by drunken troops and yeomanry, and the wives and daughters exposed to every species of indignity, brutality, and

[1] See e.g. Holt's *Memoirs*, i. 32.

[2] See Gordon's *Rebellion*, pp. 57–59. Gordon notices that after the rebellion, short hair became the fashion among men of all opinions.

[3] *Leadbeater Papers.*

[4] An old magistrate near Bray, in the county of Wicklow, wrote in April to the Government remonstrating against a project of sending troops to Newtown Mount Kennedy. 'We have never had here,' he said, 'the smallest appearance of disturbance, nor are we likely to have the least. . . . I deprecate dragooning such people. It is a bad system except in open rebellion. Those already enemies to Government it exasperates. Of those who are wavering and timid it makes decided enemies, and it tends to disaffect the loyal. Where is the man whose blood will not boil with revenge who sees the petticoat of his wife or sister cut off her back by the sabre of the dragoon merely for the crime of being green, a colour certainly with them innocent of disaffection?' (Mr. Edwards, Old Court.) Compare Gordon's *Rebellion*, p. 59.

outrage, from which neither his remonstrances nor those of other Protestant gentlemen could rescue them.'[1]

In general the military proclamations were exclusively directed to the objects of disarming the people and paralysing rebellion, but there were instances in which these lines were shamefully exceeded. The following extraordinary order was issued at Cork on May 7: 'Whereas it has been reported to General Sir James Stuart that in some parts of the county where it has been necessary to place troops at free quarters for the restoration of tranquillity, general subscriptions have been entered into by the inhabitants to purchase provisions for the troops, by which means the end proposed of making the burden fall as much as possible on the guilty is defeated by making it fall in a light proportion on the whole, and thereby easing and protecting the guilty; it has been thought proper to direct that whenever the practice has been adopted or shall be attempted, the general officers commanding divisions in the southern district shall immediately double, triple, and quadruple the number of soldiers so stationed, and shall send out foraging parties to provide provisions for the troops in the quantities mentioned in the former notice bearing date April 27, and that they shall move them from station to station through the district or barony until all arms are surrendered and tranquillity is perfectly restored, and until it is reported to the general officers by the gentlemen holding landed property and those who are employed in collecting the public revenue and tithes, that all rents, taxes, and tithes, are completely paid up.'[2]

There was, of course, considerable difference among the soldiers. A Quaker lady, who lived at Ballitore in the county of Carlow, and who has left the truest picture of the state of that part of Ireland during the rebellion, notices the excellent conduct of the King's County Militia, who were quartered upon that district, and how, when they were removed, the villagers escorted them on their way with tears and lamentations; and she contrasts their conduct with that of the Tyrone Militia, who succeeded them, and who lived in free quarters, wearing ostentatiously orange ribbons among the Catholic peasantry, and

[1] *History of the Whig Party*, i. 114.
[2] Dunfermline's *Life of Abercromby*, pp. 122, 123.

plundering alike the loyal and the disloyal.[1] The North Cork Militia, the Welsh Regiment of Ancient Britons, and two Hessian regiments, which were sent over just before the rebellion, appear to have been those which left the most bitter recollections in Ireland.

Particular instances of atrocious suffering were often related. More than one victim died under the lash, and the terror it produced was to many even worse than the punishment. Gordon mentions a case which came under his own notice, of a labouring man who dropped dead through simple fear.[2] Another case is related of a man in Dublin, who, maddened by the pain of the pitched cap, sprang into the Liffey and ended at once his sufferings and his life. In a third case, which occurred at Drogheda, a man who had undergone 500 lashes in order to compel him to reveal some concealed arms, fearing that his fortitude would be overcome, pretended that arms were concealed in a particular garden, and availed himself of a few moments of freedom which he thus obtained, to cut his throat.[3] Flogging to extort confessions appears to have been nowhere more extensively or more successfully practised than in Dublin itself, under the very eyes of the Government, and under the direction of men who were closely connected with it. A plot to seize Dublin did unquestionably exist; great stores of pikes had been accumulated, and a great number of them were discovered through the floggings. The riding school of Beresford was well known as the chief scene of the torture. In the country, it is said, whole villages were deserted, and the inhabitants slept in the ditches and in the fields through fear of outrages from the yeomen.

Some names were especially conspicuous for the hatred they attracted. There was Gowan, who had performed good service in hunting down robbers among the Wicklow mountains, but who now became famous for the multitude of houses he burnt, and who was said, though very probably untruly, to have on one occasion stirred his punch with the severed finger of a rebel.

[1] *Leadbeater Papers*, i. 223, 224.

[2] Gordon's *Hist. of the Rebellion*, pp. 88, 89.

[3] Teeling's *Narrative*, pp. 133, 134. Madden has collected much evidence about the practice of torture, i. 292–333. In a letter to Lord Castlereagh, General Dunne stated that he had ascertained that a man had been whipped to death by a magistrate in the King's County, and by another man who acted under his orders. (B.-Gen. Dunne (Tullamore) to Lord Castlereagh, Aug. 2, 1798, I.S.P.O.)

There was Hepenstal, known as 'the walking gallows,'[1] a soldier in the Wicklow Militia, gigantic in size and herculean in strength, who was accustomed to extort confessions by tying a rope round his prisoner's neck, flinging him over his shoulder, and holding him thus suspended above the ground till the half-strangled victim disclosed his arms. The figure, however, which stands out in the clearest relief is that of Thomas Judkin Fitzgerald, the High Sheriff of Tipperary. His proceedings in that county became the subject of a judicial trial, and of elaborate debates in the House of Commons, and are therefore known to us with some certainty, and with their chief circumstances of aggravation and palliation. A short study of his history and character is very instructive, as revealing a type which the stormy conditions of Irish life naturally produced, and which, if Ireland were ever separated from English influence and criticism, might once more become common.

It was a character by no means destitute of estimable and even noble qualities. His energy, courage, and knowledge of the country were fully admitted by those who most severely censured him, and after the rebellion was over he received a warm and unanimous vote of thanks from the Grand Jury of the county. In the beginning of the year, when rebellion was known to be smouldering there, and when French invasion was constantly expected, the principal gentlemen of his county came to him, as the man most likely to grapple successfully with the conspiracy, and implored him to accept the dangerous position of High Sheriff. He consented to do so, and it was emphatically stated in Parliament that if Tipperary escaped the horrors of rebellion which desolated Wicklow, Wexford, Carlow, Kildare, and Meath, this exception was mainly due to the vigilance and to the severities of its High Sheriff.[2] A curious letter from a prominent Tipperary gentleman describes Fitzgerald's dealing with a number of disaffected men. 'The High Sheriff made a speech of three hours, partly in Irish, explaining what the French would do, and said he would give

[1] See Madden's *United Irishmen*, i. 308, 309. He is said also to have shot some United Irishmen in a manner hardly distinguishable from naked murder. The epitaph written for him is well known:

'Here lie the bones of Hepenstal,
Judge, jury, gallows, rope and all.'

[2] See Howell's *State Trials*, xxvii. 765, 766, 768, 787.

them a free pardon if they delivered their arms, pikes &c., which I think we had got nearly in before, but I told him there were some people in the parish who perhaps were not entitled to pardon. He asked me their names and called them forward. Then he asked me their crimes. I told him for being up (*sic*). He asked them if they confessed; they said "Yes," but had not received their commissions. . . . He shook hands with them, gave them a lecture, made them all kneel down and pray for the King, and forgave all past offences.' He was now going to raise a corps of 100 men, 'every one of whom are to be United Irishmen. He has engaged some desperate scoundrels in this neighbourhood; he expects when he has them together that he will be able to act upon them as Sir John Fielding did on the Bow Street officers —set a rogue to catch a rogue.' He issued a printed notice ordering all who had left their homes to return at once to defend them, and to provide quarters for his Majesty's troops, at the same time eulogising in very high-flown terms the conduct of a certain Mrs. Bunbury, who with the assistance of two men-servants had successfully defended her house against a marauding party. He trusted that 'such heroic conduct of a lady of such high distinction, eminent for beauty and elegance of manners, will raise the crimson blush of shame on the pallid cheeks of those puny heroes who so disgracefully and cowardly surrendered large quantities of well-loaded arms to the rebels.'[1]

Those who are well acquainted with Irish life and character will, I think, recognise in these extracts a not unfamiliar type, and under the auspices of Fitzgerald the disarmament of Tipperary was carried out with tremendous, unscrupulous but successful energy. At the head of forty men he attacked a large body of armed rebels, and carried no less than thirty-seven carts full of captured arms into Cashel. An Irish magistrate has usually good reason, from secret information or common report, to suspect men against whom no legal evidence can be obtained, of being centres of crime and disaffection in their neighbourhoods. All such men were now seized and mercilessly flogged, till through pain or terror some kind of confession was obtained. The men who in broad daylight had attacked and plundered Cahir had hitherto defied detection, but now at last information was

[1] Sir J. Carden to Lord Rossmore (Templemore), May 5, 1798.

obtained from a man whose courage failed when he had been tied to the stake for flogging. At Nenagh several men were flogged, and great quantities of concealed arms were in consequence discovered. At Carrick-on-Suir the flogging of a single man produced such terror, that not only he but thirty-six others acknowledged themselves to be United Irishmen. 'There was scarcely a man,' it was said in Parliament, 'on whom corporal punishment had been inflicted to extort confession, who did not acknowledge guilt and discover widely extended accompliceship in treason. Immense quantities of arms of every kind were discovered, and in consequence cartloads were brought daily into Clonmel from all quarters of the county, and thus by the timely interposition of this spirited magistrate were the lives and properties of the gentlemen and loyal inhabitants preserved on the very brink of destruction.' Fitzgerald himself, when his case came into the law court, defended himself in a vehement speech, declaring that 'while sheriff he felt himself authorised to take every mode of obtaining confessions, and that in order to discover the truth, if every other mode failed, he had a right to cut off their heads.'[1]

A very respectable man named Wright, a teacher of French in the town of Clonmel, fell under his suspicion. He happened to be connected with some of the principal families of the neighbourhood, and his case therefore received an amount of attention which would not have been given to a poor and unprotected peasant. It appears that one of the suspected persons, under the torture of flogging, stated that Wright held the important position of secretary to the United Irishmen in the county, and it is possible, though by no means certain, that some secret information had been given against him. Fitzgerald formed a strong, though apparently a perfectly erroneous, opinion that this man was the head and centre of United Irishmen in Tipperary, and the repositary of all their secrets. The rebellion was at this time raging furiously in Wicklow and Wexford, and the fate of Ireland and the lives of multitudes of loyal men

[1] Howell's *State Trials*, xxvii. 762–764, 768. The reporter says the gravity of the court was a little discomposed by this method of obtaining confessions. Beresford, in one of his letters to Auckland, says: 'So far as I can see, no man has withstood the fear of any corporal punishment, and certain I am, that without much outrage hundreds would peach.' (*Auckland Correspondence*, iii. 412.)

seemed trembling in the balance. 'The peasantry of Tipperary,' said the Attorney-General, 'were to a man organised, armed, and ready to take the field at a moment's warning. A body of 8,000 rebels were ready to attack the town of Clonmel.'[1]

It was under these circumstances of terror and danger that the following horrible scene was enacted, which was disclosed in a trial before Lord Yelverton and Judge Chamberlain, and afterwards related to the House of Commons by the son of the former judge, who had been one of the counsel of Wright. Having heard that charges had been brought against him, Wright went of his own accord to the house of Fitzgerald, for the purpose of surrendering himself and challenging investigation.. Fitzgerald at once drew his sword, ordered him to his knees, and without any kind of trial, of his own authority condemned him to be first flogged and then shot. Next day Wright was dragged to a ladder in one of the streets to undergo his sentence. He knelt down to pray, with his hat before his face. Fitzgerald snatched his hat from him, trampled it on the ground, struck the prisoner on the forehead with his sword, kicked him, and dragged him by the hair. Wright was then stripped naked, tied to the ladder, and fifty lashes were administered. An officer who was in the town came up and asked Fitzgerald the reason of the punishment. Fitzgerald handed him a French note which had been found on the prisoner, and said that although he did not himself understand the language, he believed the major would find in it 'what would justify him in flogging the scoundrel to death.' The officer read it, and found it to be a perfectly insignificant note postponing an appointment. He explained this to Fitzgerald, but the Sheriff notwithstanding ordered the flogging to proceed. Wright remained silent. One hundred more lashes were administered with frightful severity, leaving the wretched man a mass of bleeding wounds, and it is even alleged that the High Sheriff asked the commanding officer of the troops who were quartered in Clonmel to send a file of soldiers to shoot the prisoner. If the request was made, it was probably for the purpose of exciting terror, for there appears to have been no attempt to carry out the sentence. Wright was flung into prison, where

[1] Howell, p. 785.

he remained for six or seven days without any medical assistance, in a cell with no other furniture than a straw pallet without covering.[1]

An indemnity Act, as I have said, had passed, indemnifying loyalists for illegal acts committed in order to suppress the rebellion; but in spite of it, Wright carried his case in March 1799 into the law courts, contending that the indemnity only applied to cases in which the magistrates had acted on clear, or at least serious, evidence of treason, had taken all possible means of ascertaining the guilt of the persons they punished, and had exercised their power with common humanity. This view of the law was fully supported by the two judges. They declared that the indemnity was never intended to protect a wanton and inhuman exercise of power, even for the purpose of putting down rebellion, that there must have been a grave and serious examination of the accused person, and that the magistrate was only entitled to plead the indemnity Act when he was able to produce information on oath of the grounds on which he acted. Strong evidence was given of the loyalty of Wright, and no evidence of the smallest value was given to impugn it. The jury found a verdict for the plaintiff with 500*l.* damages, and the judges fully concurred in the verdict, expressed their belief in the perfect innocence of Wright, and added that if much larger damages had been given they would not have been excessive.

The Government brought the case before Parliament, asking for a secret committee, before which Fitzgerald might lay the grounds of his conduct, and for a special Act of indemnity. The debate was very animated and instructive. It was not contended by the Ministers that Wright was a guilty man, though the language both of the Attorney-General and of some of the supporters of the Government implied that there were reasons for believing it. On the other hand, Colonel Bagwell, who was one of the principal gentlemen near Clonmel, declared in the most emphatic terms, and from full knowledge, that Wright was one of the most respectable and upright men in the town, and that not a shadow of just suspicion attached to him, and he asserted that there had not been more than a single case in which an inhabitant of Clonmel was proved to be a United

[1] Compare the two accounts in Howell, xxvii. 761, 769–771.

Irishman, although a number of the inhabitants of that town had been punished as such by the High Sheriff. Both he and Mr. Hutchinson, the brother of Lord Donoughmore, speaking with an intimate knowledge of the country, declared that although Fitzgerald had undoubtedly shown great zeal and performed great services, they believed that many of those whom he had tortured were perfectly innocent, and that his 'zeal had in a great many instances carried him much too far, and excited a great deal of reprobation from many gentlemen in the country.' In the town of Clogheen, Hutchinson said, a respectable innkeeper had been brought out of his house by Fitzgerald, tied to a ladder, and whipped. When he had received some lashes, Fitzgerald asked him, 'Who swore you?' The man answered that he never was sworn. After a few more stripes, the same question was repeated and the same answer given. The scourging was again begun and the High Sheriff then said, 'If you do not confess who swore you I'll cut you to death.' The man, unable to bear the torture any longer, did name a person who he said had sworn him. He was at once cut down, when he said to Lord Cahir, 'That was a lie, my lord. The man never swore me; but he said he would cut me to death if I did not accuse somebody, and to save my life I told the lie.'

What confidence, it was asked, could be placed in confessions obtained by such means? And what could be more hideously repugnant both to the letter and the spirit and the practice of English law than this systematic employment of torture as the means of extorting confessions? They did not object to the general Act of indemnity which had been passed. It was an extreme measure required by an extreme necessity, but if it was not to be made the instrument of intolerable tyranny it must be scrupulously limited, and its application carefully watched. Nothing could be more clear, nothing could be more equitable, than the principles laid down by the judges, but Parliament was now asked to pass a measure which would have the effect of sweeping away every safeguard. It was asked by an *ex post facto* law made in favour of an individual who had notoriously exceeded all bounds of humanity and moderation, to reverse a decision of a law court, arrived at after a patient trial, by a most respectable jury, and with the full approbation of two eminent

judges. It was asked to shut out from all hope of redress and compensation not only Wright, but the many other innocent men who had been tortured on the vaguest and most unfounded suspicion, and unjustly branded as traitors. It was even asked to deepen the stigma upon their characters by a parliamentary proceeding based upon evidence which was not to be disclosed. 'Was Mr. Fitzgerald,' it was asked, 'to be permitted to give secret evidence before a secret committee, and say what he pleased against the characters of those persons, in his own justification, without giving them any opportunity of refuting his assertions?' 'Was Parliament to interfere between the justice of the country and the innocent persons injured, by setting aside the verdict of a most respectable jury, which had done more than anything else to quiet the country?' 'Was it to shut the door of justice against the people, and thus to tell them that they must expect no share of protection from the laws, and must therefore look to some other means of vindication?' Was it to give a distinct legislative sanction, said one member who was at this time wavering on the question of the Union,[1] to the most reckless and most wanton application of torture? If it did, 'he declared to God, whatever might be the sentiments of his constituents, he should for himself think the sooner that Parliament was extinguished the better!'

Fitzgerald, however, had powerful defenders, and his case was urged with eloquence and skill. It was the case, it was said, of a man who at the earnest entreaty of the gentry of his county had accepted a post of great difficulty and danger, who had done so with no object except the public good, and who by his energy and courage had undoubtedly saved the lives of thousands and preserved a great county from carnage and ruin. It was said that the method of extorting confessions by torture had never been practised in England. Had there ever been in England, had there been in any other country in modern times, a situation even distantly resembling that of Ireland? Could anyone who knew what was happening in Wexford and Wicklow, and how far the conspiracy had extended in Tipperary, doubt that this county was in imminent, daily, almost hourly, danger of becoming from end to end a scene of massacre and desolation? It

[1] Browne, the member for Dublin University.

was by the floggings to extort confessions and discover arms that the conspiracy was broken and the danger averted, and every other means had signally failed. It would no doubt have been much more regular if the suspected persons had been brought before juries, but if such a course had been taken, many of those who now denounced the conduct of Fitzgerald would probably have been long since hanged from the lamp-posts or pierced by the rebel pikes. It is true that no evidence had been adduced at the trial to show the guilt of Wright. But the reason of this was very manifest. Fitzgerald was bound by an oath of secrecy not to reveal the information which had been given to him. If he had disclosed the names of his informers in order to vindicate himself in a court of justice, he would have betrayed his duty and broken his oath, and handed over those who had trusted to him to almost certain death. Everyone who knew the country knew that 'if the names of any of these men were to be disclosed, he would not live twenty-four hours.' At the very last assizes, a witness who was going to Clonmel to substantiate at a trial the evidence he had given before the magistrate, was murdered near the gate of the town. A secret committee of the House of Commons was the only tribunal before which such information could be disclosed, with safety to the lives of the informants. Those who dilated upon the excessive violence of Fitzgerald said little about his conspicuous merits and the strong claim he had established on the country, and they made no adequate allowance for the extreme dangers of the moment. At a time when a great and horrible rebellion was raging in the adjoining counties, when Tipperary was known to be fully armed and organised, when outrages were of hourly occurrence, and when there was good reason to believe that within a few days the whole county would be in a blaze, was it surprising or unpardonable that a loyal man, on whom the chief responsibility of preserving the peace devolved, should have somewhat lost the coolness of his judgment, and have sometimes acted with undue violence and precipitation? Conduct in such moments must not be judged by the ordinary rules which are applicable to quiet times. Parliament had passed an Act of amnesty casting a veil of pardon over the crimes that had been committed by the rebels. Ought it not to cover

with an equally effective indemnity the excesses that might have been committed by loyal men, for the purpose of suppressing and preventing those crimes? It was well known that it was now the policy of the disloyal party to bring a multitude of vexatious actions against men who had taken an active part in suppressing the rebellion, and as it was impossible that the secret information on which they acted should be disclosed, it would often be impossible to defend them. It was the plain duty of Parliament to stop this. 'In considering the case of Mr. Fitzgerald, the House should act from motives of general policy, and not suppose it was meant to bias their judgment by individual consideration for the petitioner. . . . It was the duty of Parliament to protect loyal men for acts done merely with a view to suppress rebellion, and not leave them open to endless persecutions and suits at law.'

The question was argued at great length, and on both sides with conspicuous ability. It was at last settled by a new and fuller indemnity Act, which was so drawn as to make such prosecutions as that of Fitzgerald almost impossible. It provided that in all cases in which sheriffs or other officers or persons were brought to trial for acts done in suppressing the rebellion, a verdict for the plaintiff should be null and void unless the jury distinctly found that the act had been done maliciously and not with an intent of suppressing rebellion, preserving public peace, or promoting the safety of the State; and that even where the juries did find that the act was 'malicious,' the judge or judges who tried the case should have the power of setting such verdicts aside.[1]

In relating this discussion I have departed from the strict chronological order of my subject, but I have done so because these debates throw a clear stream of authentic light upon the methods of repression which were at this time employed, the motives that inspired them, the arguments by which they were defended. What Fitzgerald did in Tipperary is probably not very unlike what was done in Wexford, Wicklow, and Kildare on the eve of the rebellion. In reading such narratives we seem transported from the close of the eighteenth century to distant and darker ages, in which the

[1] 39 Geo. III. c. 50.

first conditions of civilised society had not yet been attained, and to which its maxims and reasonings are inapplicable. Clare and the party that followed him always justified this violence. By the burning of houses and the transportation of great numbers of untried men they had succeeded, they said, in disarming Ulster, the province where disaffection was most dangerous. By the unsparing use of the lash, Fitzgerald had broken the conspiracy in the great county of Tipperary. By very similar means Dublin had been disarmed, and the scheme for seizing it, paralysed. These methods did not, it is true, prevent an outbreak in Wexford and some adjoining counties, but they at least succeeded in forcing it into a premature explosion before the requisite organisation and concert had been completed, and before the French had appeared upon the scene.

The language of the report of the secret committee, in which the Government stated their own case, does not make sufficient allowance for the extent to which the rebellion was a mere unorganised rising of men who were driven to desperation by intolerable military tyranny, but it at least shows very explicitly the Government policy. Up to the middle of March, the writer says, there was no serious intention of hazarding a rebellion without foreign assistance. It was the policy of the leaders to risk nothing as long as their party was gaining strength, to extend their organisation, add to their stock of arms, and wait for events. 'It appears from a variety of evidence laid before your committee, that the rebellion would not have broken out so soon as it did, had it not been for the well-timed measures adopted by Government subsequent to the proclamation of the Lord Lieutenant and Council bearing date March 30. . . . From the vigorous and summary expedients resorted to by Government, and the consequent exertions of the military, the leaders found themselves reduced to the alternative of immediate insurrection, or of being deprived of the means on which they relied for effecting their purpose, and to this cause is exclusively to be attributed that premature and desperate effort, the rashness of which has so evidently facilitated its suppression.'[1]

[1] *Report of the Secret Committee*, pp. 20, 26. So, too, in the examination of McNevin, Castlereagh said, 'You acknowledge the union [of United Irishmen] would have become stronger but for the means taken to make it explode.' (McNevin's *Pieces of Irish History*, p. 203.)

It was a desperate policy, and it had desperate results. If regarded purely as a military measure, it was certainly successful, but it must be added that it was largely responsible for the ferocity with which the rebellion was waged, and that it contributed enormously to the most permanent and deadly evils of Irish life. The hatred and distrust of law and Government, the inveterate proneness to seek redress by secret combination and by barbarous crimes, the savage animosities of class and creed and party, that make Irish government so difficult, were not created, but they were all immensely strengthened, by the events which I am relating. It must be added, too, that if martial law forced the rebellion into a premature explosion, and thus made it comparatively easy to deal with it, it also undoubtedly turned into desperate rebels multitudes who, if they had been left unmolested, would have been, if not loyal subjects, at least either neutral spectators or lukewarm and half-hearted rebels. When Emmet was asked what caused the late insurrection, he answered, 'The free quarters, the house burnings, the tortures, and the military executions in the counties of Kildare, Carlow, and Wicklow.' The answer was not a candid one, for long before these things had begun a great part of Ireland had been organised for rebellion, and was only waiting for the appearance of the French. The true causes, as we have seen, were partly political, and for these the Government was very largely responsible. The rebellion, however, among the ignorant Catholic peasantry was not mainly political. They had been in the first place allured into the conspiracy by promises of the abolition of tithes, the reduction or abolition of rents, and the redress of all real or imaginary grievances. They had then been persuaded by the United Irishmen that the Orangemen, with the connivance of the Government, intended to massacre them, and that they could only find safety in the protection of a great armed Catholic organisation. Once that organisation was planted among them, it spread rapidly by example, intimidation, or persuasion. The worst and most dangerous men came inevitably to the front. Many crimes were committed. There was no regular and well-disciplined force like the modern constabulary sufficiently powerful to maintain the peace. Martial law was declared, and the tortures, the house burnings, and other mani-

fold abuses that followed it soon completed the work, and drove the people in large districts to desperation and madness.

One of the most energetic of the leaders in Wicklow has left an account of his own experiences which is well worthy of attention. 'Self-preservation,' he says, 'was the motive which drove me into rebellion. . . . As to effecting a change of Government, it gave me little trouble or thought. Reform was much more necessary among the people of all ranks than the Government, which was good enough for me. If the laws were fairly and honestly administered, the people would have little reason to complain. It was private wrongs and individual oppression, quite unconnected with the Government, which gave the bloody and inveterate character to the rebellion in the county of Wicklow. The ambition of a few interested individuals to be at the head of affairs first lighted up the flame everywhere. . . . The poor people engaged in the Irish rebellion of 1798 had very little idea of political government. Their minds were more occupied with their own sufferings or enjoyments; and many, I might say most, were compelled to join in the rebellion on pain of death.'[1]

The capture at Bond's house on March 12 of the principal leaders of the organisation, and the general disarmament under martial law which speedily followed, had given an almost fatal blow to the conspiracy; but efforts, which for a short time seem to have escaped the knowledge of the Government, were made to reconstruct it under a new Directory, in which the most prominent members were two brothers of the name of Sheares. They were lawyers, sons of a very estimable and generous Cork banker, who had sat for many years in the House of Commons, and they had ever since 1793 borne an active, though not a very considerable, part in the conspiracy. Henry Sheares, the elder, was a weak, vain, amiable, insignificant man, utterly unsuited for the position he assumed, and chiefly governed by the stronger will of his brother. Of John Sheares I have already spoken. He impressed most of those with whom he came in contact as a man of ability and great energy, a genuine and dangerous fanatic of the type which rose to the ascendant in

[1] Holt's *Memoirs*, i. 17, 18.

France during the Reign of Terror. Fitzgerald also, the destined commander, was still at large.

A few anxious and eventful weeks passed before the storm burst. Cooke, writing a week after the arrest at Bond's, expressed his opinion that the North was seriously better, and that the organisation in Dublin had been broken, but there was no change, he thought, in the dispositions of the lower classes; a dangerous popish spirit had arisen; a French invasion would probably produce a rising, and many of the yeomanry and militia were disaffected.[1] I have noticed in the last chapter the remarkable letter in which McNally had warned the Government that the Orange passion and fanaticism which was rising in opposition to the United Irishmen had begun at the April assizes to invade the courts of justice. The same sagacious judge also warned them of the evil effects of the military excesses which had begun: 'I had accounts yesterday from Kildare,' he wrote, 'by eye-witnesses, of military depredations the most extraordinary, and I understand that among the Irish soldiers murmurs take place at the duty of distressing their countrymen.'[2] He mentions how a yeoman had gone to the house of a lawyer in Dublin to search for a green bottle-stand with the label Erin-go-bragh; how he had vainly searched the house in hopes of finding it; how fifty lashes were given to the servant of the house, and how there was much reason to believe that this wanton outrage was due to a simple motive of private revenge.[3] 'All that Colonel Duff and Fitzgerald (the Sheriff of Tipperary) have done at Nenagh,' he said in another letter, 'is known in Dublin—such as the public whippings and confessions, &c., and the pointed manner in which the Catholics are distinguished. Need I say that body are bursting with vengeance?'[4] False rumours, either arising out of panic or deliberately invented for political purposes, were flying to and fro. One report was that the Government intended immediately to introduce into Parliament a Bill for effecting a legislative union.[5] Another was that they had determined to renew all the penal laws against papists as soon as the people were disarmed. It was said that

[1] *Auckland Correspondence*, iii. 392, 393.
[2] J. W., April 27, 1798.
[3] Ibid. May 21, 1798.
[4] Ibid. Undated, but no doubt a little later than the letter last cited.
[5] Ibid.

Lord Edward would appear in a few days at the head of the rebel hosts; that a great portion of the regulars as well as the militia would co-operate with him;[1] that a rebel attack upon Dublin was impending, and that it would be followed by a general massacre.[2] Dublin was proclaimed, and partly through flogging, partly through secret information, great quantities of arms were discovered both there and in the country.[3] Two days before the rebellion broke out, Lord Clare wrote that 2,000 pikes had been already seized in Dublin, and that he had no doubt that there were still more than 10,000 concealed in it and its environs. The county of Kildare, he thought, was now nearly disarmed, for more than 4,000 pikes and 1,500 stand of firearms had been seized there.[4]

The shadow of impending rebellion hung visibly over the land, and a great part of Ireland was regarded and treated as in a state of actual war. How completely this was the case is remarkably shown by a very earnest declaration which was issued as early as May 6 by the leading Catholic gentry and clergy, including all the professors of Maynooth. It was addressed to 'the deluded people' of their persuasion 'who are now engaged in open rebellion against his Majesty's Government.' It implored them 'to return to their allegiance;' and to listen to the advice of their bishops and to the gentry of their own creed, rather than to 'a set of desperate and profligate men who are availing themselves of the want of education and experience in those whom they seek to use as instruments for gratifying their own wicked and interested views.' The writers felt themselves 'bound to rescue their names, and as far as in them lies the religion which they profess, from the ignominy which each would incur from an appearance of acquiescence in such criminal and irreligious conduct.' They declared publicly, on the eve of the struggle, their firm determination 'to stand or fall with the present existing Constitution,' and they predicted that if the rebellion triumphed it would end in the

[1] F. H., May 15, 1798. Higgins says that the rumour that the Government designed to re-enact the penal code, was sent by the Dublin conspirators widely through the country, especially to the priests.

[2] J. W., May 21.

[3] See the letters of May (I.S.P.O.), and several notices in *Faulkner's Journal* for that month.

[4] *Auckland Correspondence*, iii. 422.

downfall of the clergy as well as of 'the ancient families and respectable commercial men of the Roman Catholic religion.'[1]

The toils, however, were gradually closing around the few leading conspirators who were still at large, and of these the most important was Lord Edward Fitzgerald. The Government were perfectly aware of his treason, though they had as yet no evidence which they could produce in the law courts against him. They knew his negotiations with France; they knew from Reynolds, from McNally, and probably from others the leading part he was taking in the military organisation of the conspiracy, and shortly before the arrests at Bond's, Lord Clare had said to one of his relations, 'For God's sake get this young man out of the country; the ports shall be thrown open to you, and no hindrance whatever offered.'[2] All warnings, however, and all remonstrances were thrown away upon him; it was soon well known to the Government that he was to be at the head of an immediate insurrection, and his arrest became a matter of the first public importance.

Towards the end of 1797 Higgins discovered that an obscure and needy Catholic barrister named Magan, who was connected with the conspiracy, was prepared to sell secret information to the Government.[3] As he was a member of a baronial committee and acquainted with some of the leading conspirators,[4] his offer was readily accepted,[5] and it was soon found that he could render assistance of the utmost importance.[6] On April 22 he

[1] Plowden, ii. 679, 680.

[2] Moore's *Life of Lord E. Fitzgerald*, ii. 58 (3rd edition).

[3] The first mention of him in the I.S.P.O. is, I think, in a letter of Higgins, Nov. 24, 1797. On Jan. 5, 1798, Higgins says he had not seen Magan since, but will 'fix him to meet you at dinner at 6 P.M. to-morrow, and shall in the course of this day or in the morning give you a hint of his terms.' The addresses of these letters are not given, but they were probably written either to Cooke or Pollock.

[4] F. H., Feb. 6, 1798.

[5] 'I suppose M. will call on you. He was with me this day, and seemed as if I had received a second 100*l.* for him. For God's sake send it, and don't let me appear in so awkward a situation.' (F. H., March 15.) When the part played by this informer became important, his name was never given in full. He was spoken of simply as M., and an important letter is endorsed 'Mag.,' but the handwriting of letters written by him is clearly the same as that of one or two later letters signed Francis Magan, and the correspondence generally took place through Higgins.

[6] 'This night there is to be a meeting at Lawless's. I shall learn to-morrow the nature of it. I would wish to put you in possession of something M. knows of, that you may ask and interrogate him about them (*sic*), and let him agree to come to a fixed point of information. I know it is (or will be from his late election) in his power.' (F. H., March 28.)

wrote to Cooke: 'I did not receive your promised favour till Easter Monday last, and on reading your letter requested Mr. H. to know your leisure for an interview. . . . He wrote me a most pressing letter not to leave town. . . . At the risk of my personal safety I accompanied him in a carriage to your door. . . . I have all along had in contemplation to put you in possession of some act that would essentially serve the Government as well as the country, and it may not be very long till such is effected. At present, perhaps, you may not know that Lord Edward lurks about town and its vicinity; he with Nelson was a few days ago in the custody of a patrol or party in the neighbourhood of Lucan, but not being known and assuming other names, they were not detained for any length of time. Nelson is now the most active man, and affects, if he really does not hold, the first situation. For my part I sometimes imagine he is the person that communicated with Government; however, suspicion has not pointed at him. His absence, I know, at the present moment would be considered as very fatal to the cause in Dublin. I have just this moment heard Lord Edward has been mostly in Thomas Street.' The remainder of the letter is devoted to the more general prospects of the society and to the assurance of immediate aid which, as I have already mentioned, had come from the French Directory.[1] A week later Higgins wrote that he knew from unquestionable authority that Lord Edward Fitzgerald was in Dublin waiting to take the command of the Leinster legions, and that the rising was to take place on old May-day, and he adds: 'If you can see M. this night you can bring out where Lord Edward is concealed.' 'What hour shall I bring M. this night, if your leisure will permit? Remember to bring him to a point—I mean about Lord Edward.'[2]

Something, however, occurred to prevent the capture of Lord Edward. He appears at this time to have frequently changed his abode. As Government had obtained more certain intelligence of the impending revolt, the pursuit became more severe,

[1] Anonymous letter to Cooke endorsed 'Mag.,' Stephen's Green, April 22, 1798. On the arrest of Lord Edward and Neilson near the borders of the county Kildare, see Madden, ii. 406, 408; Moore's *Life of Lord E. Fitzgerald*, ii. 80. Neilson's name is often spelt 'Nelson' in the correspondence of the time.

[2] F. H., May 1, 1798.

and on May 11 a proclamation was issued offering a reward of 1,000*l.* for his apprehension.[1] On the 15th Higgins wrote a long letter to Cooke, in the course of which he said: 'M. seems mortified that when he placed matters within the reach of Government the opportunity was neglected.'[2] Higgins adds that a meeting had been held on Friday night at the house of a man named Murphy in Parliament Street, that letters had been sent out to many parts of the country, and that in a few days Lord Edward would appear at the head of a rebellion. 'Lord Edward,' he concludes, 'skulks from house to house—has watches and spies around, who give an account of any danger being near. It is intended he shall go into the country (it is thought Kildare) and make a rising. Give me leave to remind you of sending to M.'[3]

It is a strange and even mysterious thing that Fitzgerald had not before been arrested; and it can only be accounted for by the extreme languor of the search before May 11. Neilson and Lawless, who were well known, and several other more obscure conspirators, appear to have been continually about him, and he seems to have acted with the utmost rashness. More than once he visited his wife in disguise, and, as we have seen, it was known to the authorities that he especially haunted Thomas Street. He had been there in the house of a feather merchant named Murphy—the house in which he was ultimately captured—for about a fortnight. He subsequently stayed in the house of another feather merchant named Cormick in the same street, and he had a third place of concealment in that street in the private dwelling of a public-house keeper named Moore. It is scarcely possible that he can have remained so long in this neighbourhood, frequently accompanied by ten or twelve friends who acted as a bodyguard, without the fact being widely known, and Fitzgerald appears to have come to a rather remarkable extent in contact with men who gave infor-

[1] Madden, ii. 411.

[2] The letter goes on: 'The strange story Neilson told of receiving a message to wait on you by Hyde, and the answer he returned, induces M. to believe Neilson communicates with you, or that he dare not have sent any such kind of message. If so, M. says Neilson is playing a double game, for not only in every club and society or company he is vociferous in the abuse of Government—how they broke word and faith with him, as they do with every person who should unhappily place confidence in them.'

[3] F. H., May 15.

mation to the Government. Reynolds, as we have seen, had twice visited him after his flight, but it was his obvious wish to assist his escape. A man named John Hughes, who was certainly at one time an informer, had dined with him at Cormick's house on April 20, and Cox, the former editor of the 'Union Star,' was also much about him. After the offer of the reward the danger was manifestly greater, but Fitzgerald did not abandon his old haunts. On the night of May 17 he was sleeping in the house of Moore.[1]

In a long unsigned information, dated May 17, addressed to Cooke, some unknown writer mentions that he had been the whole day on foot, had traced his 'friend' without knowing at first where 'he was to be brought to;' and at last 'had his meeting' at a pastrycook's near Grafton Street. He had learnt that a plan was formed for a rising on Wednesday or Thursday night; that it was to take place in the North two days before the Leinster rising, in order to draw off the troops from Dublin. It was hoped that 45,000 men from Wicklow, Kildare, and the county of Dublin could then be brought together to capture the metropolis. The first object would be to seize the money in the bank. The informant then speaks of two public-houses in Thomas Street which he had visited, and says that he would meet his friends 'early in the morning to obtain further information.'[2]

The attention of Dublin was at this moment for a brief space diverted from all other subjects by a melancholy pageant which was taking place in the Parliament. The Earl of Kingston had lately shot Colonel Fitzgerald, who, with circumstances that were peculiarly dishonourable, had seduced his daughter, and on May 18 he was put on his trial for murder, before his peers. It was the third time in the eighteenth century that such a scene had been enacted in the Irish House of Lords. Lord Santry had been tried and convicted of murder in 1739. Lord Netterville had been tried and acquitted in 1743. Everything was now done to enhance the solemnity of the trial. All the Lords of the kingdom were summoned, and few were absent. They walked

[1] Madden has traced Lord Edward's movements during his concealment with great care and minuteness. He has made, however, one important mistake. He says (ii. 406) that on May 17, Fitzgerald had taken up his abode at Murphy's. It is clear from the statement of Murphy (p. 412) that he had not.

[2] Information May 17. Endorsed 'Sproule.' This seems to have no connection with Higgins and Magan.

in their robes of state in solemn procession from the House of Lords to the colonnade in front of the building, and thence to the House of Commons, which had been fitted up for the occasion. The Lord Chancellor, bearing a white wand and seated in the Speaker's chair, presided as High Steward. The temporal peers were ranged on his left, and the spiritual peers on his right. The judges in their robes occupied the table in the centre. A brilliant audience, including the peeresses and their daughters, and the Commons with their families and friends, filled every available space. The accused, clad in deep mourning, was brought from the Castle. He entered the house with his eyes fixed on the ground, knelt as he heard the charge and pleaded not guilty. The King-at-Arms in his party-coloured robe preceded him, bearing the Kingston arms emblazoned on a shield, and close by stood the executioner, holding his axe, but with the edge averted from the prisoner.

The great provocation under which Lord Kingston had acted had given him the warm sympathies of the spectators, and there was a deep and anxious suspense when the witnesses for the prosecution were three times called. But though the wife and children of the deceased man were summoned, no accuser appeared, and an acquittal became inevitable. The peers adjourned to their own house. The bishops claimed their old privilege of not voting on a question of life and death. The lay peers returned in procession to the Commons, and unanimously pronounced their brother peer not guilty, and Lord Clare, having announced the verdict, broke his wand and dissolved the assembly.[1]

The pageant, as it appears, might have had a very different termination. On that day a most important letter came from Higgins. It began with a detailed account of a meeting which had taken place on the preceding night, when letters were read from the country censuring the organised United Irishmen of the city for not having yet made a single effort. A proposal was then made to attack the Chancellor and peers when they were assembled for the trial. It appears to have been suggested by Lord Edward. It was discussed at length, and at last nega-

[1] An interesting account of this trial was sent by Bishop Percy to his wife (May 18). See, too, Barrington's *Personal Sketches*, i. 195–201. The circumstances of the death of Col. Fitzgerald are related at full in the *Annual Register*, 1797, pp. 55, 56.

tived by a majority of two.[1] Higgins adds that an alternative plan for an attack on the Castle was then proposed and adopted, 'consented to by Lord Edward and those who now form the secret committee or Directory, and is set down to take place some night in the next week. M. thinks it is on the ensuing Tuesday or Wednesday, but will be certain for your information.'[2] Having given this important intelligence, Higgins proceeded to indicate in detail, on the authority of his friend, the place where that night Lord Edward might be found.

The place pointed out was on the road from Thomas Street, where Lord Edward was now concealed, to Usher's Island, where

[1] It appears from a later letter that Magan not only furnished this information, but also played a great part in the decision. After the death of Lord Edward, Higgins wrote: 'When I waited on you early in the last month and told you of the intention of the rebels to rise on the 14th ult., you could scarcely be brought to credit such. However, it turned out a most happy circumstance that Lord Edward was then with M., who found means to prevail on him to postpone his bloody purpose in the city. Else on the day of Earl Kingston's trial you would have had a shocking scene of blood and havoc in the city. I should not have used the word prevail, because Lord Edward's purpose was put to a vote and carried by M.'s negative only.' (F. H., June 30, 1798.) In another letter, probably referring to this, Higgins takes much credit to himself 'Sure I am if I had not prevailed upon the person to come forward and act in the manner he did when the first attack was intended at the H. of C., the nobility and Government as well as the city of Dublin would have been involved in a scene of blood.' (F. H., June 24.) He recurs to the same subject July 12, 1798.

[2] Higgins goes on in his broken, ungrammatical style: 'Neilson and others have so prejudiced his mind against any promise made by Government, and of their breaking faith with those who serve their cause, after the service is rendered, that my utmost exertions have been directed to keep M. steady, who says the 300*l.* promised should have been given at once; but only giving two—and such a long interval between, as made him conceive Neilson's assertion true—and that he then was, and would still be further neglected. However, I have given him leave to draw upon me, and fully satisfied him of the honourable intentions of Government where service was actually performed, and of your kind attention if he would go forward among the meetings, communicate what is transacting, and if found necessary point out the spot where they may be seized, &c. This he has at length agreed to do. . . . I also mentioned your kind promise of obtaining 1,000*l.* for him (without the mention of his name or enrolment of it in any book) on having the business done, which he pointed out before the issuing of the proclamation. He therefore puts himself on your honour not to admit of any person to come and search his house (which, I ventured to promise, you would have observed), but to place watches after dusk, this night near the end of Watling Street or two houses up in that street from Usher's Island, another towards the Queen's bridge, and a third in Island Street, the rear of the stables near Watling Street, and which leads up towards Thomas Street and Dirty Lane, and at one of these places they will find Lord Edward disguised. He wears a wig and may have been otherwise metamorphosed, attended by one or two, but followed by several armed banditti with new daggers. He intends to give battle if not suddenly seized. Lady Egality complains dreadfully about Lord Castlereagh ordering a short passport. She will have letters sewed or quilted in her clothes, and goes to Hamburgh. I shall send you particulars.' (F. H., May 18, 1798.)

Magan lived, and there is some reason to believe that the intention was to arrest him when he was going to the house and on the invitation of his betrayer.[1] Major Sirr at the head of a party was present at the appointed hour, and the two parties encountered. A confused scuffle took place in the dark, narrow, tortuous streets. Sirr was knocked down. Lord Edward escaped and made his way to the house of Murphy in Thomas Street, where he had been formerly concealed, and where he intended to remain through the 19th.

The extreme fatuity with which the conspiracy was conducted is curiously shown by the fact that on this very day, on which the most careful concealment was so imperatively required, the brilliant uniform which Fitzgerald was to wear at the rising, was sent to the house of Murphy. Neilson, who had been sixteen months in prison, and was therefore well known to the authorities, called there in the course of the morning. The street was swarming with soldiers, who were well aware that Lord Edward must be in the neighbourhood, and a public-house belonging to Moore was searched. In spite of all this Neilson came a second time to the house in the broad daylight of the afternoon, stopped with Fitzgerald to dinner, then left the house, it is said, very abruptly, and did not even shut the hall-door behind him.[2]

A few minutes after his departure, Major Sirr, accompanied by Major Swan, Captain Ryan, and eight or nine private soldiers, arrived. As the door had been left open they entered without noise, resistance, or delay, but Sirr remained with the soldiers below to prevent a rescue or an escape, while Swan and Ryan mounted the staircase. Swan first entered the room where Fitzgerald and Murphy were. The latter remained completely passive, but Fitzgerald sprang from the bed on which he was lying, and brandishing a very formidable dagger, attacked and wounded Swan. The details of the conflict that ensued have been somewhat variously related. The wounded man fired a pocket pistol at Fitzgerald, but missed his aim, and, according to the

[1] This is stated by Mr. Fitzpatrick on the authority of a member of the Moore family in Thomas Street, with whom Lord Edward stayed. (See *Sham Squire*, pp. 110–114.) According to the earlier biographers of Fitzgerald he was going to Moira House, where his wife was, and which was in the immediate neighbourhood of Magan's house.

[2] See Murphy's narrative in Madden's *United Irishmen*, ii. 414, 415; Moore's *Life of Lord Edward Fitzgerald*, ii. 85–87.

account of Murphy, he then rushed out of the room to summon the soldiers to his aid. Whether he left it or not, it is certain that Ryan, armed only with a sword-cane, now grappled most courageously with Fitzgerald, and although he speedily received a mortal wound in his stomach, and was again and again stabbed, he clung to his prisoner till the soldiers arrived. They found Ryan bathed in blood and rapidly sinking, and Fitzgerald stood so fiercely at bay that Sirr fired in self-defence. The ball lodged in Fitzgerald's right arm near the shoulder; he staggered for a moment, and then struggling desperately was seized and captured.[1]

The capture of Lord Edward Fitzgerald was undoubtedly due to the information which was furnished by Magan through Higgins. It was owing to them that he had been obliged to take refuge in Murphy's house on the night of the 18th, and they had clearly pointed out the quarter of Dublin in which he was concealed. I do not, however, think that it was they who indicated the particular house. There is no trace of any communication having been received from them on the 19th, and Major Sirr afterwards stated that he only obtained the information of the hiding place of Lord Edward a few minutes before he went there.[2] It is probable that the fact of Neilson, who was

[1] Madden has printed the account of Murphy, who was in the room during the earlier part of the arrest, and he has also reprinted from the *Castlereagh Correspondence* the account given by the son of Ryan, who received it from his father. They agree remarkably, and I have followed them in the text. In the *Life of Reynolds* (ii. 230–236) there is another account which the biographer says his father received from Sirr and Swan, and which was published in the lifetime of the former. It differs in several small particulars from the narratives of Murphy and Ryan. Neither in the account by Reynolds nor in that given by Moore in his *Life of Lord E. Fitzgerald* is any mention made of Swan's having quitted the room. The widow of Ryan, afterwards writing to the Irish Government about a pension, said: 'My poor husband often told me that had he not determined to take Lord Edward at all events, whether he forfeited his life or not, he was certain he would have escaped through the window, which had a communication with the other houses, as he was left above fifteen minutes without assistance.' (July 14, 1798, I.S.P.O.) The last sentence is no doubt an enormous exaggeration, but in such moments seconds appear like minutes. In another letter Mrs. Ryan says her husband was left alone with Fitzgerald ten minutes after he was wounded. (July 29, 1798.) Camden's account gives the impression of Swan having had the more prominent part in the arrest (Camden to Portland, May 20, 1798), and Beresford and Cooke both represent Ryan as having only come in towards the end of the scuffle, and just before the arrival of the soldiers. *Auckland Correspondence*, iii. 414, 418. See, too, *Faulkner's Journal*, May 22, 1798.

[2] Moore's *Life of Lord E. Fitzgerald*, ii. 86. Beresford said that Sirr 'went to Murphy's house 'to search for pikes, upon a vague idea that Lord E. Fitzgerald had been there or in the next house.' (*Auckland Correspondence*, iii. 414.) In the account in

well known to be a constant companion of Fitzgerald, having been seen to leave Murphy's house, furnished the clue, and it is tolerably certain that many of the neighbours must have known that this house had been for a considerable time the hiding place of the rebel chief. It is not surprising that grave suspicions of treachery should have attached to Neilson, but they are, I believe, unfounded. Neilson, though he is one of the heroes of a class of popular writers in Ireland, is not a man deserving of any respect. He had been released from prison in the preceding February on condition that 'he should not belong to any treasonable committee,' but immediately after the arrest at Bond's house he broke his promise and became one of the most active organisers of the conspiracy.[1] He was a drunkard, and therefore peculiarly likely to have betrayed a secret, and the letters I have quoted appear to me to establish a strong probability that he either had, or intended to have, some secret communication with the Government. Two facts, however, are quite sufficient to acquit him of the charge of having deliberately betrayed Fitzgerald. Major Sirr discovered that he was one of the chief organisers of a desperate plot to rescue the prisoner,[2] and the

Reynolds's biography it is stated that on the day before the arrest Cooke informed Major Sirr that if he would go on the following day between five and six in the evening to the house of Murphy in Thomas Street he would find Fitzgerald there. (Reynolds's *Life*, ii. 229.) I believe, however, this account to be inaccurate. There is nothing in the information of Higgins about Murphy's house. The expectation was that Fitzgerald would be arrested in the street on the night of the 18th, and it was with this object that Sirr acted. Murphy said that he was told that one of Lord Edward's bodyguard gave some information, and there were various other rumours. Compare Madden, ii. 424; Fitzpatrick's *Sham Squire*, pp. 122, 123.

[1] Madden, iv. 52, 57–70.

[2] Ibid. ii. 408, 440; iv. 58. Neilson was again arrested on account of this plot. Higgins wrote: 'Your supposed quondam communicator, Neilson, had an interview with a military committee on Friday last and a further one on Tuesday—by a military committee I mean a number of militia men and soldiers united in the infernal cause of murder—who received directions from Neilson how to act. . . . Surely you could get much information from this infamous renegade villain, who, I believe, has promised you information (as every good subject ought) how to meet the plans and counteract the designs of rebels; but he has gone from one quarter of the country to the other, and to the most remote . . . inculcating rebellion. . . . Neilson, therefore, can develop almost every plan.' (F. H., May 25, 1798.) It is probable that Neilson, in communicating with the Government, only did so to betray them. In February Higgins wrote: 'Neilson made communications to Bond (and through him to all the leaders of the infernal conspiracy) of your visiting him, and of the various questions you asked. . . . It was resolved at their meeting that if their cause succeeded, Neilson should be the first object of reward;' and in a later letter: 'If Neilson is not bringing you information he is a most dangerous person to remain here. He has dined, supped &c. among the entire

promised 1,000*l.* was duly, though tardily, paid through Higgins to Magan.

The capture was a matter of transcendent importance, for the insurrection was planned for the 23rd, and Fitzgerald was to be its commander. There is not, indeed, the smallest reason to believe that Fitzgerald had any of the qualities of a great man, or was in the least likely to have led his country to any high or honourable destiny. But he was a well-known public man. He was a Protestant. He was a member of a great aristocratic family, and if he had appeared at the head of the rebellion, it is extremely probable that the northern rebels would have risen at his call, though they remained almost passive when they found the rebellion in Leinster headed by fanatical priests and by obscure country gentlemen of whom they had never heard. In that case the sea of blood which in the next months deluged a few counties would have probably overspread the whole island. From this great calamity Ireland was saved by the arrest of May 19. Of the two men who were concerned in furnishing the information, different judgments must be formed. Higgins was an open, prominent, consistent loyalist, who betrayed no one in rendering this great service to his country. Magan, as far as appears, was a simple informer. Whether any motives higher and better than a mere desire for gain inspired him, we have no means of judging.[1] On the very night in which Lord Edward was arrested, he was elected a member of the head committee of the United Irishmen.

'On the announcement of Lord Edward being taken,' Higgins wrote on the following morning, 'the butchers in Patrick's Street Market and a number from the Liberty, it seems,

of the party.' (F. H., Feb. 21, March 15, 1798.) It appears certain that if the United Irish leaders had not afterwards made a compact with the Government, Neilson would have been tried, and the Government had much hope of convicting him.

[1] Mr. Fitzpatrick, who has thrown more light than any other writer upon the career of Magan, has discovered one very curious fact. Magan's father had borrowed 1,000*l.* from a gentleman named Fetherston, for which the latter held a joint bond from father and son. The elder Magan died insolvent, and the creditor gave up all expectation of repayment. Some years later, when the original creditor was dead, Francis Magan appeared unsolicited at the house of his son and paid the debt. Mr. Fetherston was extremely surprised, as he had made no demand for the payment, and as he knew that Magan was at this time a poor man and entirely without practice at the bar. It would be curious to know whether the transaction took place shortly after the arrest of Lord Edward. See Mr. Fitzpatrick's *Sham Squire*, p. 130.

got pikes at Carman Hall, Garden Lane, and Hanover Lane to attempt a rescue, but on finding the prisoner had been removed they desisted.' Higgins adds that the armed bodyguard who usually accompanied Lord Edward were carousing at a house in Queen's Street at the time of the arrest; that Fitzgerald had intended to go down to Finglass on the following night; that on Thursday night he was to have taken the command of a great body of assembled rebels, with the intention of at once marching at their head upon Dublin. 'The sacking of Beresford's bank, burning the custom-house, seizing the Castle &c. was determined on. . . . M. recommends the most strict watchfulness of persons going out and coming in the different avenues of the city. To-morrow he will send further information. He was elected last night of the committee. I had a great deal of exertion to go through to keep him steady, and was obliged last week to advance him money: as I also stand pledged in the business to him in the payment of the 1,000*l.* or otherwise, have the goodness to let it be done immediately, and do away the improper impression he has received of the performance of Government promises.'[1]

Lord Edward Fitzgerald was removed to Newgate, and confined in a cell which had lately been occupied by Lord Aldborough. The vicissitudes of that sick-bed have been followed by several generations of Irish readers and writers with an intensity of interest hardly bestowed on any other page of Irish history. On the first day he suffered greatly from the inflammation of his wound, but it was soon relieved by suppuration; it was then believed for several days that he would recover, but fever, brought on and aggravated by anxiety of mind, set in. The death of Ryan, which took place on Thursday, the 31st,

[1] F. H., May 20 Compare, too, his letter, June 30. On June 5, Higgins writes: 'I cannot do anything with M. until you are pleased to settle, though I advanced him money.' On the 8th he writes: 'I cannot get from M. a single sentence of who assumes a Directory. I have so frequently put him off about the payment of the 1,000*l.* that he thinks I am humbugging him. I do entreat, dear sir, as I stand pledged in this business (however badly I am used myself), you will not longer delay having it settled for M' On the 18th of the same month he writes: "You were so kind as to say that you would immediately obtain what was promised to M.' On June 20 the sum was paid to Higgins, and appears in the list of secret-service money: 'F. H., discovery of L. E. F., 1,000*l.*' See Madden, i. 371. Magan had some later communications with the Government directly, or through Higgins. He especially exerted his influence to have the soldiers removed from the house of a lady where they appear to have been living at free quarters, and he wrote about a sum of 500*l.* which Cooke had promised him.

made an ignominious death the almost certain result of a trial, and it probably had a great part in hastening the catastrophe.[1] The Government determined that in the very dangerous condition of affairs no friends or relations should be admitted to persons confined for treason, and they refused till the last moments to relax their rule. They offered, however, to permit Lord Edward to see the family chaplain, which he declined, but he saw and prayed with the chaplain of the gaol. On Friday he became much worse. On Saturday there was an execution in the gaol that agitated him greatly. He prayed fervently that God would pardon and receive all who fell in the cause. On Sunday morning he seemed a little better, but the improvement was slight and transient, and on that day his aunt, Lady Louisa Conolly, received a message from the doctor that he was dying.

This lady, whose rare gifts of mind and character made a deep impression on her contemporaries, was sister of the Duke of Richmond, and wife of one of the most important members of the Irish Parliament. She was deeply attached to Lord Edward, and she at once came from Castletown to Dublin in hope of seeing him for the last time. She was accompanied by her niece, Miss Emily Napier, who has written a singularly interesting account of what occurred. They drove first to the Viceregal Lodge in the Phœnix Park, to ask permission from Lord Camden. Lady Louisa entered alone, but soon returned in a state of extreme agitation, saying that although she had even knelt at the feet of the Lord Lieutenant he had refused her, declaring that neither the Speaker nor the Chancellor would approve of any relaxation of the rule. Orders had been given to the coachman to return to the country, when Miss Napier suggested that her aunt should apply to the Chancellor, who had always been her warm admirer. The suggestion was adopted. Lord Clare happened to be dining at home, and he at once received Lady Louisa with great kindness, told her that although the Lord Lieutenant had refused her, and although the orders were peremptory, he would take the responsibility of admitting her, and would himself accompany her to the gaol.

[1] Moore's *Life of Lord E. Fitzgerald*, ii. 132. Lord Clare afterwards said: 'For some days he seemed to recover, until having taken a sudden turn he died very unexpectedly of water on his chest.' (Debate on Sept. 3.) See *Faulkner's Journal*, Sept. 4, 1798.

With a thoughtful kindness he suggested that they should first drive to Leinster House and take up Lord Henry, the favourite brother of Lord Edward, who had hitherto been denied access to the prisoner. Lord Clare and Lord Henry Fitzgerald drove first in Lord Clare's carriage, followed by Lady Louisa Conolly and her niece. At the door of the prison Lord Clare said that he must restrict his permission to the aunt and brother, and Miss Napier was driven back to Leinster House to await their return.[1] They were but just in time. Lord Edward at first knew them, but soon after became delirious. He died early on the morning of June 4.[2]

The capture of Lord Edward Fitzgerald was immediately followed by the annihilation of the new Directory through the arrest of the two Sheares and the flight of Lawless. Their arrest, as is well known, was due to information given by Captain Armstrong of the King's County Militia—a regiment which had the reputation of containing many disaffected men, and which was then quartered in a camp that had been formed at Lehaunstown or Loughlinstown, about seven miles from Dublin. Armstrong had for a long time been accustomed to frequent the shop

[1] I am indebted to the kindness of Lady Bunbury for my knowledge of Miss Napier's very interesting unpublished narrative. Sir W. Napier in a letter to Dr. Madden (ii. 454, 455) described, though with less simplicity, the part played by Camden and Clare in this matter.

[2] Lord Castlereagh in an interesting letter of Wickham (June 4, 1798, Record Office) describes the last days of Lord Edward's life. See, too, Camden to Portland, June 4; a letter of Elliot to Pelham in the Pelham MSS., and a letter of Beresford to Auckland (*Auckland Correspondence*, iii. 442, 443). Lady Louisa Conolly related the particulars of her interview with her dying nephew in a letter to Mr. Ogilvie, which is printed in Moore's *Life of Lord Edward Fitzgerald*, ii. 135–139. Lord Clare alluded to this scene with much good feeling in a speech in the House of Lords, Sept. 3. Miss Napier writes that, returning home after the death of Lord Edward, Lady Louisa Conolly related to her the circumstances of the last interview as she had stated them in her letter to Mr. Ogilvie, 'adding that nothing could exceed Lord Clare's kindness; that he had allowed nobody to remain in the room but himself; had walked away from the bed on which the poor sufferer lay so as not to hear anything that passed between them, and in short had shown her the tenderness of a brother rather than a friend, and with all his apparent sternness of manner had cried like a woman when he saw him dying.' She adds: 'As I was the sole witness of this melancholy transaction, and that it is not generally known how entirely it was owing to Lord Clare's better feeling that this last interview between my poor cousin and his aunt and brother was permitted, I have felt that it is but justice to his memory to record it.' (Account of the death of Lord E. Fitzgerald written by Miss Emily Napier.) A letter from Lady Louisa Conolly to Lord Camden (June 8) (also in the possession of Lady Bunbury), mentions that Lord Edward was buried at eleven at night in St. Werburgh's Church. A single carriage and an escort of twelve yeomen attended his remains.

of a Dublin bookseller named Byrne, who was himself a United Irishman and a great publisher of political pamphlets. It does not appear that in going there he had the smallest intention of becoming either a rebel or an informer; but he was a man of literary tastes, and was accustomed to buy all the political pamphlets that appeared. He was an ardent reader of Paine, for whose religious and political views he seems to have felt and expressed a great speculative admiration, and he talked freely, and, as he himself acknowledged, indiscreetly, about the badness of the Government, or at least of the system of taxation in Ireland. All this might have taken place, and probably did take place, without any intention of deception or any political design, but it is not surprising that it led Byrne to look upon his acquaintance as a political sympathiser. The seduction of the militia was at this time one of the first objects of the party. Great numbers of private soldiers had been sworn in, but very few of the officers had betrayed their trust, and if an officer in a regiment which was already largely permeated by disaffection could be induced to turn traitor, his services might be peculiarly valuable. Byrne imagined that Armstrong would prove a useful instrument, and he asked him if he had any objection to be introduced to Mr. Sheares.

Armstrong had never seen either of the brothers, and he at once consented. On reflecting, however, on what he had done, he formed a strong opinion, either from the manner of Byrne, or from the reputation of Sheares, or from something which was said in the course of the conversation, that the object was to engage him in the United Irish plot,[1] and he felt that the path before him was a dubious and a dangerous one. The course which he adopted was to go to the colonel of his regiment, and to another officer in whom he had full confidence, and to place himself unreservedly in their hands. He told them the request that had been made to him, and the construction he put on it. He confessed frankly that he had spoken imprudently and indiscreetly, and he asked them to direct his conduct. They both

[1] Toler in his speech for the prosecution said that Byrne spoke of the Sheares as men of talent, who were engaged in their country's cause, and who were satisfied that Armstrong could contribute to their assistance. But this is not borne out by Armstrong's published evidence. See the trial in Howell's *State Trials*, vol. xxvii.

said that it was his duty to see the Sheares, and if their object was what he supposed, to pretend so far to accede to it as to unravel the plot. The business was not of his seeking. He had never wished or asked to play the part of a spy, but if an unlooked-for chance placed in his hands the threads of a most dangerous conspiracy, and enabled him to avert or defeat a formidable and sanguinary rebellion, he could not, they said, without a failure of duty, shrink from the task. Besides his duty to his King and country, he had a duty to his regiment; and it was to avail himself of every means of discovering how far the conspiracy had really infected it.

Such were the views of Colonel L'Estrange [1] and of Captain Clibborn, and after the tragedy was completed all the brother officers of Armstrong supported them, by signing a testimonial in which they expressed their full approbation of his conduct. Armstrong acted on their advice. He was introduced to Henry and John Sheares as a man on whom they could fully rely, and the whole story soon came out. He learnt that the conspirators had now determined that it was no longer possible to wait for the French, but that an immediate rebellion must be attempted; that it was to begin with an almost simultaneous attempt to surprise the camp at Lehaunstown, to seize the artillery at Chapelizod and to capture Dublin, and that John Sheares was to go down to Cork to organise the rebellion in the South. He learnt also that the military organisation was now complete, all the captains and adjutants being appointed; that there were some United Irishmen in every regiment which had been in Dublin for the last two years, and that a meeting had lately been held of deputies from nearly every militia regiment in Ireland, including that of Armstrong himself. It was believed by the conspirators that all, or nearly all, those regiments would ultimately join the insurgents. Deputies from several different regiments had already promised recruits for the rebel army, some ten, some twenty,

[1] It is not clear from Armstrong's sworn evidence that Col. L'Estrange was consulted until after the first interview of Armstrong with the Sheares, though from that time Armstrong undoubtedly acted under his direction and with his full approbation. The statement in the text, however, is based upon that of the Attorney-General (Howell's *State Trials*, xxvii. 298), and it is confirmed by Armstrong's statement to Madden: 'I put myself under the direction of my colonel and my friend. I acted by their advice, and if I have done anything wrong, they are more culpable than I.' (*United Irishmen*, iv. 374.)

some thirty, some one hundred men, provided they had sufficient notice, but no impression had been made upon the officers. In one street through which the soldiers were likely to pass in order to attack the insurgents, so many houses had been secured that a deadly fire was likely to take place. At the outset of the rebellion the Lord Lieutenant was to be seized in the Castle, and all the privy councillors in their private houses, and in this way, it was thought, organised resistance would be paralysed. The rising at Cork and the rising in other places were to be so managed, that the news might reach Dublin at the same time. The task assigned to Armstrong was to bring over his regiment. In order to assist him, he was given the names of some soldiers in it who were already sworn in. He was recommended to act specially upon the Roman Catholics, and he was authorised to promise every soldier who joined the conspiracy that he should receive a portion of confiscated land in the King's County. He was himself promised the command of the regiment. The names of the supreme executive were not disclosed to him, and he was told that the exact day of the rising was not fixed, but that it was close at hand.

These very alarming disclosures completely confirmed the intelligence which the Government had been receiving from other sources. They were not all made at a single interview. The first took place on May 10, and immediately after, the proclamation was issued, offering a reward of 1,000*l.* for the apprehension of Lord Edward Fitzgerald. Armstrong communicated what had passed not only to Colonel L'Estrange and Captain Clibborn, but also to Lord Castlereagh and to Cooke, and he appears to have acted largely under their advice. He had several interviews with his victims, and at one of them Lawless was present. On May 20—the day after the arrest of Lord Edward Fitzgerald—he dined with the two brothers and with members of their family. He afterwards said that he had done wrong in accepting their hospitality, but that he had done so at the urgent desire of Lord Castlereagh, who had represented to him that a time when so many lives were in jeopardy, and so terrible a catastrophe was impending, was not one for indulging in delicate scruples or neglecting any possible means of information. The next day the two brothers were arrested. In their

house was found, in the handwriting of John Sheares, the draft of the proclamation to which I have already referred, urging the insurgents to give no quarter to any Irishman who resisted them.[1]

On the night before the arrest, Lawless had fled from Dublin, and he succeeded in making his way to France, where he entered the army, and rose in time to be a general under Napoleon. Byrne was arrested on the same day as the Sheares. On the 23rd, through information given by a Catholic priest, the plot of Neilson to rescue Lord Edward Fitzgerald was discovered, and Neilson was imprisoned, though he was never brought to trial, and in this way every leader in Ireland who had any real influence was removed. On the 21st Lord Castlereagh, by the direction of the Lord Lieutenant, wrote to the Lord Mayor of Dublin, announcing that a plot had been discovered for placing Dublin, in the course of the present week, in the hands of a rebel force, and for seizing the Executive Government and those of authority in the city, and on the following day a similar announcement was made to the House of Commons. The House responded by a very loyal address, and all the members, with the Speaker and Serjeant-at-Arms at their head, walked two and two through the streets to present it to the Lord Lieutenant. The guards in every point of danger were trebled, and every precaution was taken, as in a besieged city.

While these things were happening in Ireland, Arthur O'Connor and the four other men who had been arrested at Margate in the preceding February, were being tried at Maidstone on the charge of high treason. The evidence against them was of very different degrees. That against Binns went little further than to show that he had been actively employed in obtaining a boat for the escape of the others to France. The cases against Allen and Leary completely broke down, for the former was probably, and the second certainly, a simple servant, and there was no evidence that they were cognisant of the

[1] The facts relating to the Sheares will be found in their trial in Howell's *State Trials*, vol. xxvii., and in Madden's *United Irishmen*. Madden, on this as on all other matters connected with the United Irishmen, writes as a most furious partisan, but he has had the honesty to print some letters of Armstrong, and notes of a conversation with him, giving the other side of the question.

designs of their master. The priest O'Coigly and Arthur O'Connor were undoubtedly at Margate together, under false names, attempting to go to France. This, however, in itself only amounted to a misdemeanour, unless it could be proved that the purpose of their journey was a treasonable one. The evidence against O'Coigly was clear and conclusive, for in the pocket of his great-coat was found a most seditious address from 'the Secret Committee' in England to the French Executive, strongly and elaborately urging an invasion of England. The case against O'Connor turned mainly upon the question whether he was cognisant of this paper, and of the designs of his companion. It was proved that he was well acquainted with him, though he had denied the fact, and he was convicted of one or two other misstatements. It was shown also that he was the principal and guiding member of the party, and that he had paid for the whole expedition, and a cipher discovered in his razor case established a strong independent evidence of treason. It had, however, no connection with the document found in the possession of O'Coigly, and it was pretended that O'Connor was flying from the country on account of private embarrassments, and had, as a matter of charity, agreed to take with him a distressed fellow-countryman, of whose character and objects he knew nothing. The trial derived a great additional interest from the appearance of nearly all the leading members of the English Opposition, including Fox, Sheridan, Erskine, Whitbread, the Duke of Norfolk, and Lord Moira, as witnesses in favour of O'Connor. They deposed that he had lived familiarly with them, and that they considered his politics substantially identical with their own. Grattan also was summoned for the defence, but his evidence was remarkably scanty. It amounted to nothing more than that O'Connor had a good and an unreserved private character, and that he had never heard him express any opinion in any degree favourable to a French invasion, but rather the contrary.[1] The judge summed up decidedly in favour of all the prisoners except O'Coigly. The trial terminated on May 22. O'Coigly was found guilty of high treason. Binns, Allen, and Leary were acquitted and discharged. O'Connor was also

[1] See Howell's *State Trials*, xxvii. 50. This evidence has been very grossly misrepresented in a modern history.

acquitted, amid a scene of excitement and confusion such as has rarely been seen in an English court of justice,[1] but he was detained on a warrant of the Duke of Portland, on a new charge of high treason. Fortunately for himself, and fortunately too for Ireland, he remained during the next few weeks in prison, and could take no part in the rebellion.

The Government were much dissatisfied at the acquittal of O'Connor. Wickham ascribed it mainly to the impression produced by a most scandalous letter which was brought under the notice of the court before the trial began, written by a clergyman named Arthur Young, who confessed that he had come in contact with three men who had been summoned as jurymen in the case, and had urged upon them the transcendent importance of hanging the prisoners.[2] Pollock, who had been sent over on the part of the Irish Government, considered that Leary alone ought to have been acquitted, and he believed that the judge, when charging the jury, had been unconsciously influenced and intimidated by the menacing presence and demeanour of the leading members of the Opposition in Lords and Commons who were ranged before him.[3] O'Coigly had been much in Paris, and Wolfe Tone had formed a very unfavourable opinion of his character. The Government had long

[1] 'A proceeding then took place which never had an equal in Ireland. It was supposed that there was a Secretary of State's warrant to detain O'Connor, and the moment judgment of death was pronounced upon Quigly, the dock was beset and several voices were heard calling out, "The other prisoners are discharged!" "Discharge Mr. O'Connor!" In an instant he leaped from the dock. The crowd was immense, the noise prodigious, the officers of the court calling out to stop him. "Seize O'Connor!" "Stop O'Connor!" "Let O'Connor out!" &c. &c. Swords were drawn, constables' staves, sticks, bludgeons, knocking-downs, &c. The judges frightened to death almost. In short, it is scarcely possible for you to conceive such a scene. O'Connor, however, was brought back, restored to his place in the dock, and immediately after committed to gaol' (J. Pollock, May 23, 1798.)

[2] May 23. A few days later he wrote to Cooke: 'I lament most exceedingly that the hopes I had raised as to the success of the trials should have been so soon disappointed. I am persuaded, feeble as the instrument may appear, that unfortunate letter of Arthur Young's saved the lives of all the prisoners who escaped, and it was a miracle that it did not prove the salvation of Coigly.' (Cooke to Wickham, private, May 26, 1798. R.O.) See, for Young's letter, Gurney's report of the trial, pp. 47, 48. Lord Clare's comment on this is very characteristic, and, I think, very scandalous. 'I could never see any wisdom or good policy in prancing upon Candour in the face of rebels, and I can't but wish that your Attorney-General as well as ours was less fond of mounting this jaded pony. What business had he to set aside some of his best jurymen because Mr. Young chose to write a foolish rhapsody to one of them?' (*Auckland Correspondence*, iii. 438, 439.)

[3] J. Pollock, May 23, 1798.

been well aware that he was steeped in treason, and a full year before his arrest McNally had informed them that he was in Ireland on a political mission, and had reported to them the tenour of his conversation.[1] He met his fate with courage and resignation, but asserted his innocence to the last. He was hanged on Penningdon Heath on June 7.

The 23rd of May, which was the day appointed for the insurrection, had arrived. The signal was to be the stopping of the mail coaches from Dublin; and although the programme was not fully carried out, those which were going to Belfast, to Athlone, to Limerick, and to Cork, were that night seized. Long before daybreak on the 24th, numerous rebel parties were in arms in the counties of Dublin, Kildare, and Meath. In Kildare, in spite of all the stringent measures of disarmament, the rising was especially formidable, and about 2.30 on the morning of the 24th a party of rebels vaguely estimated at 1,000 men, and commanded by a farmer named Michael Reynolds, whose house had lately been burnt by the soldiers, attempted to surprise and capture the important town of Naas; Lord Gosford, however, who commanded there, had been made aware of their intention, and a party of Armagh Militia with a detachment of dragoon guards were ready to meet them. Three times the rebels dashed themselves desperately against the troops, who were stationed near the gaol, and three times they were repulsed. They then changed their tactics, took possession of almost every avenue into the town, fought the troops with great intrepidity for nearly three-quarters of an hour, but at last gave way, broke and fled, closely pursued by the cavalry. Hundreds of guns and pikes were brought in, either taken from the dead or cast away by the fugitives in their flight. Four prisoners only were taken, of whom three were hanged in the streets of Naas, while the fourth saved his life by giving valuable information. The loss on the King's side was variously estimated at from fourteen to thirty. Of the rebels, about thirty were believed to have been killed in the streets, and more than one hundred in the flight.[2]

[1] J. W., Feb. 5, 1797. Higgins had been watching O'Coigly shortly before the arrest. (F. H., Jan. 12, 1798.)

[2] Camden to Portland, May 24; Lord Gosford to General Lake, May 24, 1798; Gordon's *Hist. of the Rebellion*, pp. 74, 75; Musgrave's *Rebellions in Ireland* (2nd ed.), pp. 233, 234.

Nearly at the same time, and at a distance of but a few miles from Naas, 300 rebels attacked a small garrison of yeomen and militia at Clane. But though the loyalists were surprised and immensely outnumbered, their captain, Richard Griffith, speedily rallied them, dispersed the rebels by a well-directed fire and pursued them for some distance, killing many, and burning every house in which they took refuge. Six prisoners were taken; one was condemned at the drum-head and shot at Clane; 'the other five were hanged the same day with less ceremony by the soldiers in Naas.'

About five in the morning, Griffith brought back his little body of soldiers, and he then learnt a terrible tragedy that had been enacted three miles from Clane. The small town of Prosperous, which was the centre of the cotton industry of Ireland, had been garrisoned by forty or fifty of the North Cork Militia under Captain Swayne, and by twenty of the Ancient Britons. In the deadest hour of the early morning the sentinels on guard were surprised and killed. Some soldiers were slaughtered in their beds in the houses in which they were billeted, while the barracks were surrounded and set on fire. Many of the men who were in them perished by the flames or by suffocation. Some sprang from the windows and were caught upon the pikes of the assailants. The remainder tried to cut their way through the enemy, but nearly all perished. A gentleman named Stamer, who was the principal proprietor of Prosperous, and an English gentleman named Brewer, who was a prominent manufacturer, were murdered in cold blood. Several of the party, it is said, were recognised as men who on the very day before the tragedy, had come forward to profess their loyalty, to express contrition for past offences, and to receive protections from Captain Swayne.[1]

Griffith foresaw that the party from Prosperous would soon attack him, and he at once drew out his small and gallant force in Clane. He had scarcely done so when a great disorderly body of insurgents poured in, their ragged clothes strangely variegated by the scarlet uniforms and glittering helmets taken

[1] Musgrave has printed a deposition of one of those who escaped from Prosperous. (Appendix xv. Deposition of Thomas Davis.) See, too, Gordon's *Hist. of the Rebellion*, pp. 72–74.

from soldiers who had perished. The loyalists were vastly outnumbered, but Griffith drew up his force in an advantageous post in the corner of a field where they could not be outflanked, and awaited the attack. The rebels opened a heavy fire, but they were evidently totally unacquainted with the use of fire-arms, and every ball flew high above its mark. A deadly volley from the militia and the yeomen, and a fierce charge, soon put them to flight. Many were killed. 'The roads and fields,' writes Griffith, 'were instantly covered with pikes, pitchforks, sabres and some muskets. Five of the Ancient Britons, whose lives the insurgents had spared and put in the front of the battle on foot, armed only with pikes, deserted to us and gave us the horrid detail of the massacre at Prosperous. We pursued the rebels to near that town, but did not think it prudent to enter it lest we should be fired at from the houses. We therefore returned to Clane, got our men reported, and having put our wounded men on cars proceeded to Naas, whither we had received orders to march.'

Before, however, the march began, a very curious incident occurred. When the little force was first called together, many men were absent, and it was noticed that among them was Dr. Esmonde, the first lieutenant. A yeoman had strayed in and privately informed Captain Griffith that this very officer had actually commanded the rebels in the attack on Prosperous. Dr. Esmonde was brother of Sir Thomas Esmonde, the head of a conspicuous Catholic family of Wexford. He had only the Sunday before accompanied Captain Swayne to the chapel at Prosperous to exhort the people to surrender their arms, and it is even said that the very night before his treachery he had dined with his intended victim. He had succeeded in seducing some of the yeomen under his command, and had gone off in the night to lead the rebels. The yeoman who gave the information had been of the party, but his mind misgave him, and he escaped in the darkness.

Griffith had but just received this startling information, and his force was drawn out for leaving Clane, when Esmonde himself rode in, 'his hair dressed, his boots and breeches quite clean, and himself fully accoutred,' and took his accustomed station at the right of the troop. Griffith was at first speechless with

astonishment and indignation, but he resolved to command himself, and Esmonde, fancying himself unsuspected, actually rode with the troops to Naas as second in command. When they arrived there, the captain ordered them to halt before the gaol, and at once lodged the traitor within it. Ample proof of his treachery was obtained, and he was sent to Dublin, tried and hanged.[1]

Other inconsiderable conflicts, consisting chiefly of attacks on small detachments of yeomen or militia and on the villages they occupied, took place, on the first two days of the rebellion, near Rathfarnham, Tallagh, Lucan, Lusk, Dunboyne, Barretstown, Baltinglass, and Kilcullen.[2] With very few exceptions the troops had everywhere the advantage, though at Kilcullen the pikemen succeeded in three times repelling the charge of a body of heavy cavalry under General Dundas; and in two other places the rebels victoriously attacked small detachments of troops and succeeded in plundering their baggage. At Baltinglass, twenty-nine miles to the south of Dublin, on the other hand, one hundred rebels were killed without the loss of a single loyalist. Some small towns and villages were occupied by rebels. Numerous houses were plundered, and several murders were unquestionably committed, though in the confused, contradictory, and partisan accounts of what took place, it is impossible with any confidence to estimate their number. The troops appear to have given little or no quarter to those who were found with arms in their hands, and those who were not immediately killed seem to have been either flogged to extort information, or shot or hanged in a very summary manner, often without any form of trial. Shouts of 'Down with the Orangemen!' and numerous attacks upon Protestants where Catholics were unmolested, showed the character the struggle was likely to assume with the Catholic peasantry. On the other hand, Catholics formed the great majority of the Irish militia and a considerable minority of the yeomen. The Catholic Lord Fingall, at the head of some corps of yeomen chiefly of his own persuasion, took a most active and efficient part in suppressing

[1] See a long and interesting letter of Richard Griffith to Pelham (June 4, 1798) in the Pelham MSS.

[2] Gordon, pp. 71, 72; Plowden, ii. 688–695; *Faulkner's Journal*, May 26, 27, 1798.

the rebellion. A numerously signed address expressing the deepest loyalty was presented to the Lord Lieutenant by the most respectable Dublin Catholics, and Archbishop Troy at once ordered an earnest exhortation to loyalty to be read from the altar at every mass. But religious passion from the first mingled largely in the struggle, and its influence was magnified both by panic and by design, for men on both sides found it useful for their purposes to fan the flame by spreading rumours of impending religious massacres. Numbers of panic-stricken Protestants scattered over the districts in rebellion fled for protection to the towns; the yeomen and militia men who deserted to the rebels appear to have been almost exclusively Catholics, and the great majority of those who were murdered or plundered by the rebels were Protestants. The Catholics, on the other hand, were told that the Government had resolved to exterminate them, and that nothing remained for them but to sell their lives dearly.

The recent arrests had deprived the rebellion of its commander-in-chief and its Directory, and the failure of the plan for the capture of the Castle and of the governors of Ireland reduced it to a number of isolated and almost aimless outbreaks. Even after the arrest of Lord Edward, however, Higgins assured the Government, on the excellent authority of Magan, that the plot for seizing Dublin was by no means abandoned,[1] and for some days there were abundant signs of danger. Bodies of rebels, manifestly intended to march upon the metropolis and to co-operate with a rising there, approached Dublin from many different quarters; some of them appeared at a distance of only about three miles, both at Santry and at Rathfarnham, but they were promptly attacked and speedily dispersed by the corps of fencible cavalry known as Lord Jocelyn's Foxhunters. Signal fires blazed ominously by night from many points of the Dublin and Wicklow hills. Within the city the lamplighters struck work, meaning to leave the streets in total darkness, but they were forced at the point of the bayonet to light the lamps. Crowds of domestic servants, workmen, clerks, and shopmen disappeared from their usual posts, having gone off to join the rebels. McNally warned the Government that there was much

[1] F. H., May 24, 1798. He gave a similar warning on June 5.

to fear from the treachery of servants, and that there was a design to stop all provisions for the city.

Martial law had been at once proclaimed, and every precaution was taken to guard against surprise. The old city watchmen, who were perfectly inadequate for such an emergency, were still suffered to call the hour, but they were deprived of their pikes and muskets, and the task of preserving order was entrusted to the yeomanry, who discharged it with a vigilance and an energy which were then universally recognised. The force in Dublin was already very powerful, and in the first fortnight of the rebellion nearly a thousand more citizens joined it, while many others might have been enrolled, if it had not been for the determination of the authorities to accept no one whose loyalty was not beyond dispute. Parties of yeomanry patrolled the streets by night, and guarded all the most important positions. Cannon were placed opposite Kilmainham and the new prison. Tocsins or alarm bells were set up in various parts of the town, and stringent orders were given that whenever the alarm was sounded during the night, the neighbouring householders must place lights outside their windows. The bridges on the canals that flank three sides of Dublin were removed or strongly guarded; all assemblies were forbidden, and strict orders were given, as in other proclaimed districts, that no unauthorised person should appear in the streets between nine at night and five in the morning; that all householders should post outside their doors lists of those who were within; that all those who had formerly registered their arms should send in an inventory of them to the town clerk. General Vallancy was consulted about the defence of the Castle, and recommended some additional precautions, especially the accumulation of large supplies of hand-grenades, which he considered the most effective weapons against a tumultuous attack. The brushmakers' shops were especially watched, for it was found that the long mops known as 'Popes' heads' were made use of as pike handles.

The search for arms was prosecuted with untiring vigilance, and the discovery in the course of a few days of several large stores of pikes or pike heads, and even of a few cannon, clearly showed the reality and the magnitude of the danger. Some of these

arms were found concealed in carts, as they were being moved from one part of the city to the other, and others in the search of suspected houses; but the discovery, in most cases, was due either to secret information or to confessions that were extorted under the lash. Courts-martial were daily held, and many persons were hanged in the barracks or over Carlisle bridge; 124 suspected rebels were sent on a single day to the tender. The bodies of many rebels who had been sabred in the fights round Dublin were brought into the town on carts and exposed in the Castle yard.

The proclamation issued by the Lord Lieutenant and Council directed the generals commanding his Majesty's forces to punish all persons acting, aiding, or in any way assisting in the rebellion, according to martial law, 'either by death or otherwise, as they shall deem most expedient.' This proclamation was at once laid before the House of Commons and unanimously sanctioned. One member even spoke of giving it a retrospective action, and executing under it the political prisoners who were now under arrest, but the suggestion, though it was received with some applause, was happily not pressed to a division. The flogging of suspected persons in order to discover arms was practised openly and avowedly, and it proved exceedingly efficacious, and there was, as might have been expected, some unauthorised violence. The house of a prominent rebel named Byrne, who had been killed at Tallagh, and a house near Townshend Street in which arms were discovered, were burnt to ashes; and when Bishop Percy two days after the arrest of Lord Edward Fitzgerald drove down to Thomas Street to see the spot where it occurred, he found the soldiers busily engaged in burning in the middle of the street, piles of furniture taken from tradesmen's houses in which pikes had been discovered. McNally complained bitterly that he could not appear without insult in the streets; and his own house was searched and a silver cup was taken.[1]

On the whole, however, the most striking feature of the time, in Dublin, was the energy and the promptitude with which the citizens armed and organised themselves for the protection of

[1] In addition to the Government correspondence and the ordinary histories of the rebellion, I have made use of *Saunders's Newsletter* and *Faulkner's Journal*, and of the letters of Bishop Percy.

their city. The real public spirit, manhood, and intelligence of the Irish people in those dreary days must not be looked for among the ignorant, half-starved rebels who were plundering and wasting the country, but much rather in the loyalists who rose by thousands to subdue them; who again and again scattered bodies ten times as numerous as themselves, and who even before the arrival of English troops had broken the force of the rebellion. Dublin was no doubt full of rebels and conspirators, but they were completely cowed, and under the swift stern measures of martial law they shrank into obscurity. All the loyal classes were under arms. Bankers, merchants, shopkeepers, students of the university, and even some clergymen, were hastily enrolled. A circular was issued by the archbishop to his clergy expressly authorising them to assume the military character.[1] There was a special corps of barristers, and it is said that no less than 800 attorneys enlisted in the yeomanry.[2] At the opening of Trinity term, the bar, the juries, and the attorneys appeared almost without exception in military uniform, and Judge Downes informed them that as almost every duty that could now employ men in the city was military, he would detain them as short a time as possible; that no continuous business would be taken up which was not urgently necessary, and that, with the exception of the King's law officers, all the attorneys and members of the bar were expected to appear in court in military uniform.[3]

Countless rumours of impending acts of murder or treachery were circulated, and for some days there was a complete ignorance about the extent of the rebellion. Camden wrote on the 25th that all communications with the South were cut off, and that the judges who were going to the assizes at Clonmel were compelled to turn back. Reinforcements, he said, were urgently

[1] *Saunders's Newsletter*, June 13.

[2] Barrington's *Personal Sketches*, iii. 395.

[3] *Saunders's Newsletter*, June 11. 'The order,' McNally wrote, 'that barristers in uniform only should move during the present term at the bar cannot have a good effect. What does it do but furnish a disguise? Will a change of colour produce a change of principles? Besides, there are several who, from personal infirmities, could not assume a military dress without becoming objects of laughter. It would be well perhaps if some of the judges would institute a corps of invalids. McNally might lead blind Moore to battle. But is it just to deprive men of bread because nature or misfortune has crippled their limbs or impaired their constitutions?' (J. W., June 12, 1798.)

needed, but there was as yet no news of insurrection in the North.[1]

There is much reason to believe that the outbreak was witnessed with gratification by many of the members and supporters of Government, who believed that the disease which had been during the last years poisoning all the springs of Irish life would be now by a short sharp crisis effectually expelled. I have quoted the imprudent language to this effect used by Beresford in the House of Commons in 1797. Just a month before the rebels appeared in the field, the Knight of Kerry made a remarkable speech in which he declared that the country was incontestably in a state of rebellion; that it was the lurking and mysterious character of the conspiracy that constituted its real danger, and that once the rebels appeared in the field, that danger would soon be over.[2] At the very beginning of the rebellion Lord Clare predicted that the country 'would be more safe and peaceable than for many years back.'[3] 'I consider,' wrote Cooke in a very confidential letter, 'this insurrection, however distressing, as really the salvation of the country. If you look at the accounts that 200,000 men are sworn in a conspiracy, how could that conspiracy be cleared without a burst? *Besides, it will prove many things necessary for the future settlement of the country when peace arises.*'[4]

The Queen's County, as we have seen, had long been in a state of extreme disturbance. It had been proclaimed towards the end of January, and under the influence of martial law great numbers of suspected rebels had been imprisoned, and great quantities of arms discovered and surrendered.[5] On the 25th an open rebellion broke out in it, but only in the feeblest, the most unorganised, and inefficient form. There was much robbery. There were also, it is said, some isolated murders of Protestants, and at four in the morning a party variously estimated at 1,000

[1] Camden to Portland, May 25, 1798.

[2] *Saunders's Newsletter*, April 25, 1798.

[3] Letter of Bishop Percy (British Museum), May 24, 1798. Percy, who was living much among the members of the Irish Government, adds his own opinion: 'In a month's time, all will be perfectly composed, I doubt not, through the whole country; in the metropolis and its environs as well as in the North. But for some days past we have had great commotions and disturbances here.'

[4] Cooke to Wickham (private), May 26, 1798. The italics are mine.

[5] *Saunders's Newsletter*, Jan. 26, April 5, May 4 and 8, 1798.

or 2,000 attacked the little town of Monastrevan, which was garrisoned by eighty-four yeomen. There was some serious fighting, and the issue for one or two hours seemed very doubtful, but the yeomanry then drove back their assailants, who set fire to some houses and retired under the shelter of the smoke, leaving sixty or seventy of their number dead on the field. Only four or five of the yeomen appear to have fallen. It was noticed that of the gallant little band that defended Monastrevan, fourteen were Catholics, and that ten others were Methodists, who had been deprived of their arms for refusing to exercise on Sundays, but who now offered their services and bore a distinguished part in the fight.[1]

With this exception, no event of any real importance took place during the rebellion in this county. Some of the rebels who had attacked Monastrevan proceeded towards Portarlington, but they had now dwindled to a disorderly mob of about 200 poor, unguided men, and they were met and easily dispersed by a small body of cavalry at Clonanna, some four miles from Portarlington. Twenty of them were killed at that place, and in or near the wood of Kilbracken.[2] It has been stated that the escape of the remainder was largely due to a yeomanry officer whom they had taken prisoner and whose life they had spared. They at first entreated him to command them, and on his refusal they piteously implored him to advise them. He recommended them to fling away their pikes and to fly across the quaking bog, where the cavalry could not pursue them.[3]

On the same morning on which Monastrevan was attacked, 1,000 or 1,500 rebels attempted to surprise the town of Carlow. They assembled in the middle of the night on the lawn of Sir Edward Crosbie, who lived a mile and a half from the town, and at two in the morning they proceeded to the attack. But either from secret information, or through their total neglect of the most ordinary precautions, their design was known, and the garrison of 450 men, some of them being regular soldiers, were prepared to receive them. The rebels entered Carlow by Tullow

[1] Compare Gordon, p. 80; Maxwell, p. 67; Musgrave; Crookshank's *Hist. of Methodism in Ireland*, pp. 133, 134; and the accounts and despatches in *Saunders's Newsletter*, June 6 and 8, 1798.

[2] Lord Portarlington to Sir J. Parnell, May 25; Major Leatham to Gen. Sir C. Asgill, May 26, 1798 (I.S.P.O.).

[3] Crookshank's *Hist. of Methodism in Ireland*, ii. 134.

Street, unopposed, and proceeded to the open place at the end, where they set up a sudden yell. It was at once answered by a deadly fire from the soldiers, who had been posted at many different points. The panic-stricken rebels endeavoured to fly, but found their retreat cut off; the houses in which they sought a refuge were set on fire, and the soldiers shot or bayoneted all who attempted to escape from the flames. Not less than eighty houses were burnt, and that evening nineteen carts were constantly employed in carrying charred or mangled corpses to a gravel pit near the town. During several days, it is said, roasted remains of rebels fell from the chimneys in which they had concealed themselves. It was believed that more than 600 perished in the fight, or in the flames, or by martial law, without the loss of a single life on the other side.[1]

For the general aspect of the county of Carlow during the rebellion, I can hardly do better than refer my reader to the truthful and graphic journal of Mary Leadbeater, the friend of Burke, and the daughter of his old Quaker schoolmaster, Shackleton. In that most fascinating and pathetic book he will find a lifelike picture of the free quarters, the burning of houses, the floggings, the plunder, the many murders, and many random or wanton outrages that were committed, and he will probably find some difficulty in striking the balance between the crimes of the rebels and the outrages of the soldiers. The condition of the county was that of simple anarchy, in which the restraints of law and legal authority were almost wholly abrogated. There was certainly nothing in the least resembling a desire to massacre the Protestant population, and Mrs. Leadbeater relates many instances of touching kindness and chivalry on the part of the rebels. On the other hand, there were many savage murders, and personal popularity or unpopularity counted for much. 'Women and children,' she says, 'were spared, and Quakers in general escaped; but woe to the oppressor of the poor, the hard

[1] Compare Gordon, Plowden, and Musgrave, and an account by a field officer, who was with the Carlow garrison, printed in Maxwell's *Hist. of the Irish Rebellion*, p. 73. Mrs. Leadbeater says: 'An attack in the night had been made on Carlow, which was repulsed with slaughter, amounting almost to massacre. A row of cabins, in which numbers of the defeated insurgents had taken shelter, were set on fire, and the inmates burned to death. No quarter was given, no mercy shown; and most of those who had escaped, burning with disappointment, rage, and revenge, joined the Wexford party.' (*Leadbeater Papers*, i. 237.)

landlord, the severe master, or him who was looked upon as an enemy.' The few members of the upper classes who were to be seen were generally dressed in deep black, for there was scarcely a family which had not lost a member.

Among the victims of martial law in this county was Sir Edward Crosbie, who was tried with indecent haste by a court-martial, of which only one member was of a higher rank than a captain, and whose execution appears to have been little better than a judicial murder. He had been a parliamentary reformer of the school of Grattan; he was a benevolent and popular landlord, and he had, a few months before the rebellion, given money for the support of some political prisoners who were in a state of extreme destitution in Carlow gaol, but there was no reason to believe that he was either a United Irishman or a republican. He certainly took no part in the attack on Carlow, and it does not appear that he had any previous knowledge of the intention of the rebels to assemble on his lawn. Some doubtful and suspected evidence, given by one or two convicted United Irishmen, who were trying to save their lives, was, it is true, adduced to the effect that he had uttered words of sympathy with the party, but, on the whole, the probability is that he was a perfectly innocent man, and was completely passive in the matter. The point on which the court-martial seems to have especially insisted was, that he had not at once gone to Carlow to give information. It was urged, probably with perfect truth, that it was impossible for him to have done so, for all his servants had declared themselves United Irishmen; he was surrounded by armed men, and even if he had himself succeeded in escaping, his family would almost certainly have been murdered. The court-martial was hurried through when men were mad with fear and rage. Crosbie had only an hour given him to prepare his defence. He had no proper counsel, and some intended witnesses in his favour afterwards swore that they had tried in vain to obtain admission into the barracks. He was hanged and decapitated, and his head was fixed on a pike outside Carlow gaol. It was afterwards stolen during the night by an old, faithful servant, who brought it to the family burying place.[1]

[1] See an interesting pamphlet, published by his family at Bath in 1801, called, *Accurate and Impartial Narration of the Apprehension, Trial,*

It appeared at this time very probable that the rebellion was already broken.[1] Mobs of half-starved, half-armed, and wholly undisciplined men, without the smallest sign of any skilful or intelligent leadership, or even of any genuine fanaticism, and in many cases almost without common courage, were as yet the only representatives of the conspiracy which had appeared so formidable. On the very day of the attack on Carlow, a body of rebels, estimated at more than 3,000, were routed and scattered at Hacketstown, in the same county, with the loss of about 200 men, by a detachment of Antrim Militia and a small force of yeomen, and two soldiers only were slightly injured.[2] On the 26th another rebel body, reckoned at 4,000 men, were totally routed at the hill of Tarah, in Meath, by a force of yeomanry apparently not more than a tenth part of their number. Among the spoils taken in this battle were a general's uniform and a side saddle, and it was noticed that a woman or a man in woman's clothes was prominent among the rebels. 'The killed,' wrote a magistrate the next day, 'were not less than 200. Two prisoners only were taken, who were shot this morning. . . . The roads this day were covered with dead bodies and green cockades, together with pikes and horses they had pressed.'[3] Before the flight was over, it was estimated that at least 350 of the rebels had been killed, while the loss on the loyal side was only nine killed and sixteen wounded. Three hundred horses, and all the ammunition and baggage of the rebels, were captured, and eight soldiers, whom they had taken prisoners and preserved alive, were released. Lord Fingall and his Catholic yeomanry bore a distinguished part in this battle. Its consequences were very important, for it completely broke the rebellion in Meath, and it

and Execution of Sir Edward Crosbie, Bart. The minutes of the court-martial, which the family long tried in vain to see, will be found in the Irish State Paper Office. Mrs. Leadbeater gives an extremely unfavourable picture of the conduct on another occasion of Major Denis, who presided at the court-martial. (*Leadbeater Papers*, i. 239.)

[1] This was evidently the opinion of Bishop Percy, who was then in Dublin, and who mixed much in the Government circles. As early as May 26, he wrote to his wife, that such multitudes of the rebels had been slaughtered, that it was believed that the kingdom would be quieter for many years. Two days later, he wrote that the rebels were everywhere dispersed, 'with great slaughter and very little loss.' 'In a slaughter of 300 or 400, it seldom happens that the King's troops lose more than three or four individuals.' (Bishop Percy's Letters, Brit. Mus.)

[2] Gordon, pp. 81, 82.

[3] Geo. Lambert (Beauparc), May 27, 1798.

reopened the communication between the northern part of the kingdom and the metropolis.[1]

In Carlow, the Queen's County, and Meath, indeed, the rebellion was already fairly broken. In Kildare, where it had been much more formidable, it was rapidly dwindling. The village of Rathangan, in that county, appears to have been the scene of some of the most horrible murders in the rebellion. It had been occupied by the rebels on May 26, and they had at once murdered an active magistrate who lived there, and are stated by Musgrave to have afterwards murdered with the utmost deliberation, and often with circumstances of aggravated brutality, not less than eighteen other persons, all of them being Protestants. On the 28th a detachment of Tullamore yeomanry cavalry endeavoured to relieve the town, but they were met with so heavy a fire from the windows that they took flight, with a loss of three killed and eleven wounded. Soon after, however, Colonel Longfield appeared at the head of the City of Cork Militia. This regiment, it may be noticed, like many others employed in suppressing the rebellion, must have been mainly Catholic, and it was accompanied by a detachment of dragoons and by two field-pieces. The rebels had entrenched themselves near the great canal, apparently with some skill, but at the second discharge of artillery they broke into a precipitate flight. No loss was sustained by the troops of Colonel Longfield, but between fifty and sixty rebels were killed in the fight, and several others were afterwards hanged.[2]

Nearly at the same time a rebel leader named Perkins, who was encamped with a large force on a hill near the Curragh of Kildare, sent a message to General Dundas, offering to surrender, provided he and his men obtained a free pardon, and were suffered to return to their homes, and provided also, certain conspicuous prisoners were released. To the great indignation of the leading supporters of the Government, Dundas transmitted this proposal to Camden, and recommended that it should be accepted. Camden sent back orders to insist upon an unconditional surrender, but in the meantime Dundas had made a

[1] Plowden, ii. 702, 703; Gordon, p. 82.

[2] Musgrave, pp. 251–258; Gordon, p. 83. See, too, on the many murders at Rathangan, a letter from Clare, (*Auckland Correspondence*, iii. 437.)

short truce with the rebels, and they readily agreed to lay down their arms and disperse, on no other condition than being left at peace. About 2,000 men are said to have availed themselves of this permission, and to have dispersed to their homes with shouts of joy, leaving thirteen cartloads of pikes behind them.[1]

The conduct of Dundas was furiously blamed in Dublin, and for a time this general was scarcely less unpopular in Government circles than Abercromby had been. In Parliament, also, he appears to have been bitterly and angrily condemned;[2] but if his policy had been steadily pursued, it would have probably brought the rebellion to a speedy and bloodless end. It was interrupted, however, three days later, by a horrible tragedy. Another large body of rebels, who had agreed with General Dundas to surrender their arms, were assembled for that purpose at a place called Gibbet-rath, on the Curragh of Kildare. Sir James Duff, who had just made a rapid march from Limerick with 600 men, proceeded with his force to receive the weapons. Unfortunately, a gun was fired from the rebel ranks. According to the most probable account, it was fired into the air by a rebel, who foolishly boasted that he would only deliver his gun empty. Instantly, a deadly volley was poured by the troops into the rebels, who fled in wild panic and disorder, fiercely pursued by Lord Jocelyn's Foxhunters. The officers lost all control over their men. In the vast and open plain, defence and escape were alike impossible; and although General Dundas, on hearing what had occurred, hastened to do all that was possible to arrest the slaughter, between 200 and 300 men were killed.

The affair was plausibly, though untruly, represented as a deliberate plot to massacre defenceless men, who had been lured by the promise of pardon into the plain; and it contributed, perhaps, more than any other single cause, to check the disposition to surrender arms. Its bad effects must have been much aggravated by the language used in the House of Commons, where the clemency of Dundas was vehemently denounced, and

[1] See Gordon, pp. 83, 84. The account, however, of Gordon, must be compared with the letters (extremely hostile to Dundas) from Beresford and Clare in the *Auckland Correspondence*, iii. 432–438.

[2] *Auckland Correspondence*, iii. 433, 440. See, too, Camden to Portland (private), May 31, 1798. Camden adds: 'The feelings of the country are so exasperated, as scarcely to be satisfied with anything short of extirpation.'

where a vote of thanks was moved to Sir James Duff. An incident, which occurred at this time, illustrates vividly the extreme recklessness with which human life was now treated in Ireland. A very excellent Kildare Protestant clergyman, named Williamson, fell into the hands of the rebels. The intercession of a Catholic priest saved his life, and he was preserved as a prisoner. He was recaptured by the loyalists, who at once and without trial proceeded to hang him as a rebel. It happened that his brother-in-law was an officer in the regiment, and by this chance alone his life was saved.[1]

If a French force of disciplined soldiers had arrived in Ireland at the beginning of the outbreak, or even if without that arrival the rebel plot for seizing Dublin and the Irish Executive had succeeded, the rebellion would very probably for a time at least have triumphed, and Ireland might have passed out of English rule. Neither of these things had happened, and the one remaining chance of the rebels lay in a simultaneous rising, extending over all parts of the island. Such a rising was part of the scheme of the original leaders, and if their plans had not been dislocated by their arrest, it might have taken place. As yet, however, the rebellion had only appeared in a small part of Leinster. Connaught was perfectly peaceful. In Munster, though some pikes were captured, and some slight disorders appeared near Cork and Limerick, there was no semblance of regular rebellion.[2] Above all, Ulster, where the conspiracy had begun, where its organisation was most perfect, and where its outbreak was most dreaded, was absolutely passive, and remained so for a full fortnight after the rebellion began. The plan of the rebellion had

[1] Compare Gordon, pp. 84–86; Plowden, ii. 706–709; Musgrave, pp. 263, 264.

[2] 'Sir James Stuart informs me that the South of Ireland is yet quiet, but the dissatisfaction remains, and no discoveries have been made from a real repentance, but have all been forced by severity.' (Camden to Portland, June 2, 1798.) Some discoveries, which were regarded as very important, were made at this time by a young man, who was said to be a confidential friend of Lord Edward Fitzgerald, and he stated that 4,000 French were expected to land on the Cork coast in the course of this week. Cooke wrote that leaders of the United Irishmen had been arrested at Limerick, Cork, Kinsale, and West Meath, and that 1,500 pikes had been given up near Cork. (Cooke to Wickham, June 2, 1790.) Several persons were flogged, and some, it appears, hanged, about this time at Cork and Limerick. (*Saunders's Newsletter*, June 12, 16, 1798.) Some small bodies of rebels appeared in arms in the south-western part of the county of Cork about June 19, but they were put down with little difficulty in a few days. (Gordon, pp. 163, 164.)

been wholly frustrated. The expected capture of Dublin had failed. The desertion of the Catholic militia, which had been fully counted on, had not taken place, and the forces on the side of the Government had displayed an unexpected energy. The Irish yeomanry have been much and justly blamed by historians for their want of discipline, for their extreme recklessness in destroying both life and property, and for the violent religious passions they too frequently displayed. But if their faults were great, their merits were equally conspicuous. To their patriotic energy, to their ceaseless vigilance, to the courage with which they were always ready to encounter armed bodies, five or even ten times as numerous as themselves, the suppression of the rebellion was mainly due. But the flame had no sooner begun to burn low in the central counties, than it burst out with redoubled fierceness in Wicklow and Wexford, and soon acquired dimensions which taxed all the energies of the Government.

In neither county was it fully expected. Wicklow was one of the most peaceful and most prosperous counties in Ireland. It possessed a large and very respectable resident gentry. The condition of its farmers and labourers was above the average, and it had always been singularly free from disturbance and outrage. Its proximity to Dublin, however, made it peculiarly open to the seductions of the United Irishmen, and it is said that, from an early period of the movement, a party among the Wicklow priests had favoured the conspiracy.[1] The organisation spread so seriously, that some districts were proclaimed in November 1797.[2] There was no branch of the Orange Society in the county of Wicklow, but the yeomanry force in this county is said to have taken a peculiarly sectarian character, for the strenuous and successful efforts of the United Irishmen to prevent the Catholics from enlisting in it, made it necessary to fill the ranks with Protestants of the lowest order. Having thus succeeded in making the armed force mainly Protestant, the conspirators industriously spread reports that the Orangemen were about to massacre the Catholics, and were supported and instigated by the Government. I have already noticed the maddening terror which such rumours produced, and a Catholic historian states, that in this county not once

[1] See Burdy's *History of Ireland*, p. 498. [2] Musgrave, p. 301.

only, but on several occasions, the whole Catholic population for the extent of thirty miles deserted their homes, and slept in the open air, through the belief that the armed Protestants were about to sweep down upon them, to massacre them, or at least to expel them from the county.[1]

By these means a population with very little interest in political questions were scared into rebellion; the conspiracy took root and spread, and the methods of repression that were adopted soon completed the work. The burning of houses, often on the most frivolous grounds, the floggings of suspected individuals, the insults to women, and all the many acts of violence, plunder, brutality, and oppression, that inevitably follow when undisciplined forces, drawn mainly from the lowest classes of society, are suffered to live at free quarters upon a hostile population, lashed the people to madness. I have quoted from the autobiography of Holt the remarkable passage, in which that Wicklow rebel declared how foreign were political and legislative grievances from the motives that turned him into a rebel, and the persecution of those who fell under suspicion was by no means confined to the poor. We have seen a striking example of this in the treatment of Reynolds in the county of Kildare. Grattan himself lived in the county of Wicklow, but fortunately he was detained in England, during the worst period of martial law, by the postponement of the trial of O'Connor; his family, however, found themselves exposed to so many insults, and even dangers, that they took refuge in Wales.[2] A great part of the Ancient Britons were quartered in the county of Wicklow, and these Welsh soldiers appear to have everywhere aroused a deeper hatred than any others who were employed in Ireland.

Some time before the rebellion began, those who knew the people well, perceived that a dangerous movement was on foot. A general indisposition to pay debts of any kind, or fulfil any engagements; a marked change in the manner of the people; mysterious meetings by night; vague but persistent rumours, pointing to some great coming change; signal fires appearing frequently upon the hills; busy strangers moving from cottage to cottage, all foreshadowed the storm. There was also a sudden cessation of drinking; a rapid and unnatural abatement

[1] Plowden, ii. 714–716.

[2] Grattan's *Life*, iv. 377–382.

of the usual turbulence at fairs or wakes, which, to those who knew Ireland well, was very ominous.[1]

The adjoining county of Wexford was also one of the most prosperous in Ireland. Land sold there at an unusually high price. It had a considerable and intelligent resident gentry, and in general the peasantry were comfortably situated,[2] though there were some districts in which there was extreme poverty. The people were Catholic, but mainly descended from English settlers, and this county boasted that it was the parent of the volunteer movement, the first corps having been raised by Wexford gentlemen, under the command of Sir Vesey Colclough, for the purpose of repressing Whiteboy outrages.[3] Unlike Wicklow, however, Wexford had been an important centre of Defenderism. A great part of the county had been sworn in to resist the payment of tithes, and in 1793 bodies, numbering, it is said, more than 1,000 men, and very bravely commanded by a young farmer named Moore, had appeared in arms around Enniscorthy. A distinguished officer named Vallotton, who had been first aide-de-camp to General Elliot during the famous siege of Gibraltar, lost his life in suppressing these obscure disturbances, and more than eighty of the Defenders were killed.[4] After this period, however, Wexford appears to have been remarkably free from crime and from illegal organisations,[5] though it took a considerable part in the agitation for Catholic emancipation. It has been asserted by its local historians, that the United Irish movement had made little way in it before the rebellion,[6] and that it was one of the latest and least organised

[1] Holt's *Memoirs*, i. 20–24.

[2] Hay's *History of the Rebellion in Wexford* (ed. 1803), pp. 12, 14. This writer is a violent partisan of the rebels. Some of the Wexford magistrates obtained during the rebellion, and in the weeks of martial law that preceded it, a reputation for extreme violence; but it is remarkable that, even in the fiercely partisan accounts of the rebel historians, several of them are spoken of with respect, and even affection. Lord Courtown, Mr. Turner, Mr. Carew, and Mr. Pounden (who was afterwards killed at the head of the yeomanry at Enniscorthy), evidently tried to carry out the disarming with moderation and humanity.

[3] Ibid. p. 12.

[4] Taylor's *History of the Wexford Rebellion*, pp. 10–13; Hay, pp. 21–28.

[5] Musgrave, p. 319.

[6] Gordon, p. 86; Hay, p. 55. The statement of these writers was supported by some secret information. On Oct. 17, 1797, Higgins wrote an important letter, stating that the Ulster Committee had just proposed an immediate rising, but that the Leinster Committee refused its consent, stating that, though Dublin was ready, some of the other Leinster counties were not, and that Wexford, by the last returns, only contained 294 United Irishmen.

counties in Leinster; but this statement is hardly consistent with the progress which had been made in arming the population, and it is distinctly contradicted by Miles Byrne, who took an active part in the Wexford rebellion, and who assures us that before a shot was fired, the great mass of the people of Wexford had become United Irishmen.[1] How far there was any real political or anti-English feeling smouldering among them, is very difficult to determine. My own opinion, for which I have collected much evidence in this book, is, that there was little positive political disloyalty, though there was much turbulence and anarchy, among the Irish Catholic peasantry, till shortly before the rebellion of 1798, and their attitude at the time of the French expedition to Bantry Bay can hardly be mistaken. Byrne, however, stated in his old age, that he could well remember the sorrow and consternation expressed in the Wexford chapels when the news arrived that the French had failed to land, and he mentions that his own father had told him, that he would sooner see his son dead than wearing the red uniform of the King, and had more than once shown him the country around their farm, bidding him remember that all this had belonged to their ancestors, and that all this had been plundered from them by the English invaders.[2]

In the latter part of 1797, the magistrates became aware that the conspiracy was spreading in the county. It was found that secret meetings were held in many districts, and the usual rumours of plots of the Orangemen to murder their Catholic neighbours were being industriously circulated by seditious agents, although, 'in fact,' as an historian who lived in the county observes, 'there was no such thing as an Orange association formed in the county of Wexford until a few months after the suppression of the rebellion, nor were there any Orangemen in the county at its breaking out, except a few in the towns, where detachments of the North Cork Regiment of Militia were

[1] *Memoirs of Miles Byrne*, i. 55, 56. Hay had based his assertion chiefly on the fact, that reports of the United Irish movement seized at Bond's house, when the leaders of the conspiracy were arrested, made scarcely any mention of Wexford. But Byrne says that the delegate from that county had been delayed, and had not arrived. It appears, however, true that scarcely anything had been done in Wexford to give the people the rudiments of military training, to appoint their commanders, or to form them into regiments

[2] Ibid. i. 7–10

stationed.'[1] The yeomanry officers discovered that numbers of the Catholics in their corps had been seduced, and they tried to combat the evil by imposing a new test, obliging every man to declare that he was not, and would not be, either an Orangeman or a United Irishman. Many refused to take it, and the Government did not approve of it; but the evil was found to be so serious, that a great part of the yeomanry were disbanded and disarmed.[2] These precautions, as the rebellion shows, were certainly far from needless; but the result was, that the yeomanry became almost exclusively Protestant. It was discovered about the same time, by means of an informer, that several blacksmiths were busily employed in the manufacture of pikes, and one of them, when arrested, confessed that he had been making them for upwards of a year without being suspected. At the end of November there was a meeting of magistrates at Gorey, and by the votes of the majority, 16 out of the 142 parishes in the county were proclaimed.[3] Lord Mountnorris adopted a course which was at that time frequent in Ireland, and went, accompanied by some other magistrates, from chapel to chapel during mass time, exhorting the people to come forward and take the oath of allegiance, promising them 'protections' if they did so, but threatening free quarters if they refused. Great numbers, headed by their priests, took the oath, received protections, and succeeded in disarming suspicion. Many of these were soon after prominent in the rebellion.[4]

It was observed in the beginning of 1798, that the attendance in the chapels suddenly and greatly increased, and religious ceremonies multiplied. Trees were cut down in great numbers, with the evident intention of making pike handles, and the magistrates had little doubt that a vast conspiracy was weaving its meshes around them. At the same time, they almost wholly failed in obtaining trustworthy evidence.[5] Fear or sympathy closed the mouths of witnesses, and several prosecutions which were instituted at the spring assizes failed, as the sole informer proved to be a man of no character or credibility. One man, however, was convicted on clear evidence of having thrown the

[1] Taylor, p. 15.
[2] Byrne, i. 19–24.
[3] Hay, p. 52.
[4] Musgrave, pp. 320–323; Hay, pp. 52, 53; Gordon, pp. 86, 87; Taylor, p. 18.
[5] Byrne, i. 23.

whole country between Arklow and Bray into a paroxysm of terror, by going among the people telling them that the French had arrived at Bantry, that the yeomen or Orangemen (who were described as if they were identical) were about to march to encounter them, but that, before doing so, they had determined to massacre the entire Catholic population around them. It is easy to conceive the motive and the origin of a report so skilfully devised to drive the whole Catholic population into rebellion, and the historian who has the strongest sympathies with the Wexford rebels, states that 'their first inducement to combine was to render their party strong enough to resist the Orangemen, whom they actually believed to be associated and sworn for the extermination of the Catholics, and "*to wade ankle-deep in their blood.*"' 'It was frequently,' he adds, 'reported through the country, that the Orangemen were to rise in the night-time, to murder all the Catholics.' At the same time, in the opposite quarter, corresponding fears were rapidly rising, and the respectable Catholics in the neighbourhood of Gorey offered a reward of one hundred guineas for the detection of those who had spread a rumour that on Sunday, April 29, all the churches were to be attacked, and that a general massacre of Protestants was to follow.[1]

It was evident that the county was in a very dangerous state, and it was equally evident that if the conspiracy exploded, it would take the form of a religious war. On April 27, the whole county was proclaimed and put under martial law, and it was martial law carried out not by the passionless and resistless force of a well-disciplined army, but mainly by small parties of yeomen and militia, who had been hastily armed for the defence of their homes and families, who were so few that if a rebellion broke out before the population had been disarmed, they would almost certainly have been massacred, and who were entirely unaccustomed to military discipline. As might have been expected, such circumstances at once led to outrages which, although they may have been exaggerated and multiplied by partisan historians, were undoubtedly numerous and horrible. Great numbers of suspected persons were flogged, or otherwise tortured. Some were strung up in their homes to be hanged,

[1] Hay's *Hist. of the Rebellion in Wexford*, pp. 53–56.

and then let down half strangled to elicit confession, and this process is said to have been repeated on the same victim as much as three times.[1] Numbers of cabins were burnt to the ground because pikes or other weapons had been found in them, or because the inhabitants, contrary to the proclamation, were absent from them during the night, or even because they belonged to suspected persons. The torture of the pitched cap, which never before appears to have been known in Ireland, was now introduced by the North Cork Militia, and excited fierce terror and resentment.

It was in the week previous to the outbreak of the rebellion that these excesses reached their height. A gentleman of the name of Dawson discovered that, though his tenants had very recently come forward in their chapel, and in the presence of their priest, to take the oath of allegiance, they were, notwithstanding, actively engaged in the fabrication of pikes. He succeeded in obtaining some confessions, and immediately great numbers surrendered pikes, and asked and obtained protections.[2] A meeting of the magistrates was held, and they agreed that readiness to take the oath of allegiance, unaccompanied by a surrender of arms, must no longer be accepted as a proof of loyalty; that the danger of the county was extreme and imminent, and that the most strenuous measures were required. Free quarters had not yet been enforced in Wexford; but the magistrates now announced, that they would begin in fourteen days in every district in which arms had not been surrendered.[3] In the meantime, burnings, whippings, transportations, and torture were unsparingly employed to force a surrender. One active magistrate is said to have scoured the country at the head of a party of cavalry yeomen, accompanied by a regular executioner, with a hanging rope and a cat-o'-nine-tails, flogging and half strangling suspected persons till confessions were elicited and arms surrendered. A Catholic historian graphically describes the inhabitants of a village when the yeomanry descended on them. 'They had the appearance of being more dead than alive, from the apprehension of having their houses burnt and themselves whipped. . . . They fled out of their

[1] Hay's *Hist. of the Rebellion in Wexford*, p. 64.

[2] Musgrave, pp. 321–325.

[3] This was on May 23. (Hay, pp 73–78.)

houses into large brakes of furze on a hill immediately above the village, whence they could hear the cries of one of their neighbours, who was dragged out of his house, tied up to a thorn tree, and while one yeoman continued flogging him, another was throwing water on his back. The groans of the unfortunate sufferer, from the stillness of the night, reverberated widely through the appalled neighbourhood, and the spot of execution, these men represented to have appeared next morning "as if a pig had been killed there."[1]

'Protections' could no longer be obtained by the simple process of taking the oath of allegiance without a surrender of arms, and it is pretended by the rebel historians that many innocent persons were so terrified and so persecuted if they did not possess them, that they made desperate efforts to obtain arms for the sole purpose of surrendering them. It is certain, however, that the country was at this time full of arms, accumulated for the purpose of rebellion, and it is equally certain, that the violent measures that were taken, produced the surrender of many of them. In the single parish of Camolin many hundreds were given up in a few days, and it is stated that several thousands of protections were issued in the week before the rebellion.

As the yeomen were chiefly Protestants, it is perhaps not surprising that they should have been regarded as Orangemen, but it is much more strange that this charge should have especially centred on the North Cork Militia. This regiment is accused by historians of both parties of having first publicly introduced the Orange system into the county of Wexford, where it appears previously to have been unknown,[2] and it seems to have excited a stronger popular resentment than any other Irish regiment during the rebellion. It was commanded by Lord Kingsborough, and it is worthy of especial notice, that it only came to the county of Wexford in the course of April.[3] It is probably true that some of its officers wore Orange badges, and it is perhaps true that they had connected themselves with

[1] Hay, pp. 78, 79.

[2] Compare Taylor, p. 15; Hay, p. 57.

[3] Hay says (p. 57), 'in the beginning' of April; but Musgrave, whose information is very precise, says it only arrived in the county on April 26, and consisted of only 300 men (p. 325). Long before this date, the county was permeated with sedition.

the Orange Society, but it is quite certain that no regiment raised in the South of Ireland, and in an essentially Catholic county, could possibly have consisted largely of Orangemen. It happened that Newenham, the excellent historian of the social condition of Ireland, had been major in it about two years before the rebellion broke out, and he mentions that at that time two-thirds of the regiment were Catholics.[1] Whatever may have been its demerits, no regiment showed a more unflinching loyalty during the rebellion, and it is said to have lost a full third of its numbers.

The terror and resentment in Wexford were much increased by a horrible tragedy which took place, on the morning of May 24, at the little town of Dunlavin, in the adjoining county of Wicklow. 'Thirty-four men,' says the historian, who is in sympathy with the rebellion, 'were shot without trial, and among them the informer on whose evidence they were arrested. Strange to tell, officers presided to sanction these proceedings.'[2] The other version of the transaction is given by Musgrave. He says that large columns of rebels were advancing on Dunlavin, and the small garrison of yeomen and militia found that they were far too few to hold it. The number of prisoners in the gaol for treason greatly exceeded that of the yeomen. Under these circumstances, 'the officers, having conferred for some time, were of opinion that some of the yeomen who had been disarmed, and were at that time in prison for being notorious traitors, should be shot. Nineteen, therefore, of the Saunders Grove corps, and nine of the Narromore, were immediately led out and suffered death. It may be said in excuse for this act of severe and summary justice, that they would have joined the numerous bodies of rebels who were roving round, and at that time threatened the town. At the same time, they discharged the greater part of their prisoners, in consideration of their former good characters.'[3]

Another slaughter of the same kind is said to have taken place on the following day, at the little town of Carnew, in the

[1] Newenham's *State of Ireland*, p. 273. Newenham, in fact, quotes this regiment as an example of the loyalty shown by large bodies of Catholics during the rebellion.

[2] Hay, p. 87.

[3] Musgrave, p. 243.

same county, but there is, I believe, no evidence in existence which can explain its circumstances. As Carnew was at this time in the centre of the rebellious district,[1] it is probable that this also was a case of a small body of yeomen, menaced by a superior rebel force, and reduced to the alternative of shooting or releasing their prisoners. Hay, who is the authority for the story, declares that at Carnew 'on May 25, twenty-eight prisoners were brought out of the place of confinement, and deliberately shot in a ball alley by the yeomen and a party of the Antrim Militia, the infernal deed being sanctioned by the presence of their officers. Many of the men thus inhumanly butchered had been confined on mere suspicion.'[2] In the history of Musgrave there is no mention whatever of this terrible story, nor is it, I believe, anywhere referred to either in contemporary newspapers or in the Government correspondence; but I cannot dismiss it as a fabrication, in the face of the language of Gordon, who is the most truthful and temperate of the loyalist historians. 'No quarter,' he says, 'was given to persons taken prisoners as rebels, with or without arms. For one instance, fifty-four were shot in the little town of Carnew in the space of three days.'[3]

The history of the Wexford rebellion has been treated by several writers, who had ample opportunities of ascertaining the facts, but they have in general written under the influence of the most furious party and religious passion, and sometimes of deep personal injuries, and they have employed themselves mainly in collecting, aggravating, and elaborating the crimes of one side, and in either concealing or reducing to the smallest proportions those of the other. Few narratives of the same period are so utterly different, and the reader who will compare the Protestant accounts in Musgrave, Taylor, and Jackson, with the Catholic accounts in Hay, Byrne, Cloney, and Teeling, will, I think, understand how difficult is the task of any writer whose only object is to tell the story with simple and unexaggerated truth. Fortunately, however, one contemporary historian belongs to a different category. Gordon was a Pro-

[1] Hay, pp. 86, 87.

[2] Ibid. pp. 76, 87. See also Byrne's *Memoirs*, i. 35, 36. Byrne says he knew several of the murdered men.

[3] Gordon, p. 222.

testant clergyman, who had resided for about twenty-three years near Gorey, which was one of the chief centres of the insurrection; he was intimately acquainted with the circumstances of the country, and his son was a lieutenant in a yeomanry regiment, which took an active part in suppressing the rebellion. He was a writer of little ability and no great research, but he had admirable opportunities of knowing the truth, and no one who reads his history can doubt that he was a most excellent, truthful, moderate, and humane man, singularly free from religious and political bigotry, loyal beyond all suspicion, but yet with an occasional, and very pardonable, bias towards the weaker side.

His estimate of the causes of the rebellion is probably as near the truth as it is possible for us to arrive at. He does not conceal the fact, that a dangerous political conspiracy had been planted in the country, but he attributes the magnitude and the fierceness of the Wexford rebellion to causes that were in no degree political—to religious animosities; to the terror excited in both sects by the rumours of impending massacres; to the neglect of the Government, which left the country, in a time of great danger, without any sufficient protection; to the violent irritation produced by the military measures that have been described. These measures were not, he admits, altogether inefficacious for good. 'In the neighbourhood of Gorey,' he says, 'if I am not mistaken, the terror of the whippings was in particular so great, that the people would have been extremely glad to renounce for ever all notions of opposition to Government, if they could have been assured of permission to remain in a state of quietness.' But a maddening panic was abroad, and by a strange error of judgment, while the most violent animosities were excited, the military force in the county was utterly inadequate. 'Not above six hundred men, at most, of the regular army or militia were stationed in the county, the defence of which was almost abandoned to the troops of yeomanry and their supplementaries, while the magistrates in the several districts were employed in ordering the seizure, imprisonment, and whipping of numbers of suspected persons.' He adds, that another great error had been made in making the yeomanry force, cavalry instead of infantry. He had no doubt 'that of the latter, a force might have been raised within the county of

Wexford, quite sufficient to crush the rebellion in its commencement in this part of Ireland.'[1]

It was on the evening of Saturday, May 26, that the standard of insurrection was raised at a place called Boulavogue, between Wexford and Gorey, by Father John Murphy, the curate of the parish, a priest who had been educated at Seville, and whose character is very variously, though not quite incompatibly, represented by the opposing parties. He is described by one set of writers as an ignorant, narrow-minded, sanguinary fanatic, and by another set of writers as an honest and simple-minded man, who had been driven to desperation by the burning of his house and chapel, and of the houses of some of his parishioners.[2] A small party of eighteen or twenty yeomanry cavalry, on hearing of the assembly, hastened to disperse it, but they were unexpectedly attacked, and scattered, and Lieutenant Bookey, who commanded them, was killed. Next day the circle of devastation rapidly spread. Two very inoffensive clergymen, and five or, according to another account, seven other persons, were murdered, and the houses of the Protestant farmers in the neighbourhood were soon in a blaze. A considerable number of Catholic yeomen deserted to the rebels, who now concentrated themselves on two hills called Oulart and Killthomas, the former ten miles to the north of Wexford, the latter nine miles to the west of Gorey. Two hundred and fifty yeomen attacked and easily dispersed the rebels on Killthomas Hill, though they were about ten times as numerous as their assailants. The retribution was terrible. About one hundred and fifty rebels were killed; the yeomen pursued the remainder for some seven miles, burning on their way two Catholic chapels and, it is said, not less than

[1] Gordon's *Hist. of the Irish Rebellion*, pp. 86–88. Musgrave says that, when the rebellion broke out, 'there were no other troops in the county of Wexford but the North Cork Militia, consisting of but 300 men, and they did not arrive there till April 26. Their headquarters were at Wexford, where three companies of them were stationed; the remainder were quartered at Gorey, Enniscorthy, and Ferns. Two thousand troops properly cantoned in it would have awed the rebels into obedience, and have prevented the possibility of a rising.' (P. 326.) Musgrave probably underrates the number of the North Cork Militia. Newenham (*State of Ireland*, p. 273) says they were 600, which seems to agree with Gordon's estimate.

[2] Compare the accounts in Hay, Cloney, and Miles Byrne, with those in Musgrave. Musgrave admits that Father John's house was burnt, but states (supporting himself by depositions), that it was not until after that priest had taken arms, and he asserts that the yeomanry captain prevented his men from burning the chapel.

one hundred cabins and farmhouses, and they are accused of having shot many unarmed and inoffensive persons. Two or three Catholic priests were among the rebels of Killthomas.[1]

A more formidable body of rebels, estimated at about 4,000, under the command of Father John, had assembled on the hill of Oulart. With the complete contempt for disorderly and half-armed rebel mobs which characterised the Irish loyalists, a picked body of only 110 of the North Cork Militia, under the command of Colonel Foote, proceeded at once to attack them, while a few cavalry were collected below to cut off their retreat. The confidence of the loyalist militia seemed at first justified, for the rebels fled at the first onset, hotly pursued up the hill by the militia, when Father John succeeded in rallying his pikemen. He told them that they were surrounded, and must either conquer or perish, and placing himself at their head, he charged the troops. These were scattered in the pursuit, and breathless from the ascent, and they had never before experienced the formidable character of the Irish pike. In a few moments almost the whole body were stretched lifeless on the ground; five only of the force that mounted the hill, succeeded in reaching the cavalry below and escaping to Wexford.

This encounter took place on the morning of Whitsunday, May 27. Its effects were very great. The whole country was at once in arms, while the loyalists fled from every village and farmhouse in the neighbourhood. Father John lost no time in following up his success. He encamped that night on Carrigrew Hill, and early on the following day he occupied the little town of Camolin, about six miles from Oulart, where he found 700 or 800 guns. Some of them belonged to the yeomen, but most of them had been collected from the surrounding country when it was disarmed. He then proceeded two miles farther, to Ferns, whence all the loyalists had fled, and after a short pause, and on the same day, resolved to attack Enniscorthy, one

[1] Gordon, pp. 90–92; Taylor, pp. 26–30; Hay, pp. 87–89. See, too, the very curious journal of Father J. Murphy, printed by Musgrave, Appendix, p. 83. Hay positively says: 'The yeomanry in the north of the county proceeded on the 27th against a quiet and defenceless populace; sallied forth in their neighbourhoods, burned numbers of houses, and put to death hundreds of persons who were unarmed, unoffending, and unresisting; so that those who had taken up arms had the greater chance of escape at that time.' (P. 89.)

of the most important towns in the county, and a chief military centre.

The great majority of his followers consisted of a rabble of half-starved peasantry, drawn from a country which was sunk in abject squalor and misery [1]—men who were assuredly perfectly indifferent to the political objects of the United Irishmen, but who were driven into rebellion by fear of Orange massacres, or by exasperation at military severities.[2] Most of them had no better arms than pitchforks, and great numbers of women were among them. They had no tents, no commissariat, no cavalry, hardly a vestige of discipline or organisation; and although the capture of Camolin had given them many guns, they were in general quite incapable of using them. There were, however, some exceptions to the general inefficiency. There were among them men from the barony of Shilmalier, who had been trained from boyhood to shoot the sea birds and other wild fowl for the Dublin market, and who were in consequence excellent marksmen; there were deserters from the yeomanry, who were acquainted with the use of arms and with the rules of discipline; and after the success at Oulart Hill, a few sons of substantial farmers gradually came in with their guns and horses, while even the most unpractised found the pike a weapon of terrible effect. No other weapon, indeed, employed by the rebels, was so dreaded by the soldiers, especially by the cavalry; no other weapon inflicted such terrible wounds, or proved at close quarters so formidable.[3]

Enniscorthy was attacked shortly after midday on the 28th, and captured after more than three hours of very severe fighting.

[1] I have quoted Whitley Stokes's description of the condition of the peasantry at Oulart, vol. vii. p. 168.

[2] Cloney gives a vivid picture of the state of feeling at this time. 'While the events which I have related were occurring on the 25th, 26th, and 27th, the people in my quarter of the country . . . were in the most terrorstruck and feverish anxiety, as reports were for some time industriously circulated that the Orangemen would turn out, and commit a general and indiscriminate massacre on the Roman Catholics. . . . The most peaceable and well-disposed fancied they saw themselves, their families, and their neighbours, involved in one common ruin, and that each approaching night might possibly be the last of their domestic happiness. No one slept in his own house. The very whistling of the birds seemed to report the approach of an enemy. The remembrance of the wailings of the women and the cries of the children awake in my mind, even at this period, feelings of deep horror.' (*Personal Narrative of the Transactions in the County of Wexford*, p. 14.)

[3] See Byrne's *Memoirs*, i. 123, 162, 163, 266; Holt's *Memoirs*, i. 43, 156.

The garrison appears to have consisted of about 300 infantry and cavalry yeomen, and militia, and they were supported by some hastily raised volunteers. The rebel force had now swollen to 6,000 or 7,000 men. The little garrison sallied forth to attack the assailants, and a severe and obstinate fight ensued. Adopting a rude but not ineffectual strategy, which they more than once repeated in the course of the rebellion, and which is said to have been practised in Ireland as far back as the days of Strongbow, the rebels broke the ranks of the soldiers by driving into them a number of horses and cattle, which were goaded on by the pikemen. The yeomen at last, finding themselves in danger of being surrounded, were driven backwards into the town, and made a stand in the market-place and on the bridge across the Slaney. For some time a disorderly fight continued, with so fluctuating a fortune, that orange and green ribbons are said to have been alternately displayed by many in the town. Soon, however, a number of houses were set on fire, and a scene of wild confusion began. The ammunition of the yeomanry ran short. The rebels forded the river; and a general flight took place. The loyalists in wild confusion fled through the burning streets, and made their way to Wexford, which was eleven Irish miles distant. The rebels, fatigued with their labours of the day, attempted no pursuit, and after searching the town for ammunition, they retired, and formed their camp around the summit of Vinegar Hill, a small rocky eminence which rises immediately behind the town. Three officers and rather more than eighty soldiers had fallen, and between four and five hundred houses and cabins had been burnt. The loss of the insurgents is vaguely estimated at from one hundred to five hundred men.[1]

When the news of the capture of Enniscorthy arrived at Wexford, the wildest terror prevailed. The wives of soldiers who had been killed ran screaming through the streets, while streams of fugitives poured in, covered with dust and blood, half fainting with terror and fatigue, and thrown destitute upon the world. The few ships that lay in the harbour were soon thronged with

[1] There is, as usual, a great diversity in the accounts of the proceedings in Enniscorthy. Musgrave accuses the rebels of killing all the wounded, and committing many other atrocities, while Byrne expressly says that no houses were burned or pillaged after the town was taken, and that the insurgents abstained from imitating the cruelties of the yeomanry and soldiers.

women and children, and most of the adult men who possessed or could procure weapons, prepared to defend the town from the anticipated attack. Fears of massacre, however, from without, and of treachery from within, hung heavy on every mind, and an attempt was made to avert the calamity by negotiation. Three prominent and popular country gentlemen, named Bagenal Harvey, John Henry Colclough, and Edward Fitzgerald, who were supposed to have some sympathy with the rebellion, had been arrested on suspicion, and thrown into Wexford gaol, and it was now proposed to release them, and request them to go to the insurgents on Vinegar Hill, for the purpose of inducing them to disperse. Colclough and Fitzgerald, who were both Catholics, accepted the mission. They were received with great applause by the rebels, but their efforts proved wholly vain. Colclough returned to Wexford. Fitzgerald, either voluntarily or through compulsion, remained with the rebels, who at once made him one of their chiefs.

A party of two hundred Donegal Militia with a six-pounder arrived at Wexford from Duncannon Fort, which was twenty-three miles from Wexford, early on the morning of the 29th, and they brought with them the promise from General Fawcett of further assistance. Including the volunteers, the town now contained about twelve hundred well-armed defenders. To avoid the danger of a conflagration like that of Enniscorthy, orders were given that all fires should be extinguished except during specified hours, and all thatched houses in or near the town were stripped, while barriers were raised at the chief passes.

The rebels meanwhile wasted some precious hours in indecision and divided counsels. They scoured the country for arms and provisions, compelled prominent men to come into their camp, and murdered some who were peculiarly obnoxious to them. Two men named Hay and Barker, who had seen considerable service in the French army, now joined them. Hay was the brother of the historian of the rebellion, and a member of a family which had taken a prominent part in the Catholic affairs of the county. Barker had served with distinction in the Irish Brigade. There was, however, no acknowledged commander, no fixed plan, no discipline. It was noticed that particular grievances, and the interests of particular districts, completely

dominated, with the great mass of the rebels, over all general considerations, and this fact clearly indicated the kind of influences that had brought the greater part of them together. One man pointed to his forehead, scorched and branded by the pitched cap; another showed with burning anger his lacerated back; others told how their cottages had been burnt, how their little properties had been plundered or destroyed, how their wives and daughters had been insulted by the yeomen, and implored that a force might be sent either to protect their families from massacre by the Orangemen, or to avenge the grievances they had suffered. It needed all the influence of Father John, and of a few men of superior social standing, to prevent the rebel army from disintegrating into small groups, and it is doubtful whether they would have succeeded if the mission of Fitzgerald and Colclough had not persuaded the people that the enemy were completely discouraged.[1] And even when the tendency to dispersion was checked, the question, which town should next be attacked, profoundly divided the rebel chiefs. They were divided between New Ross, Newtown-barry, and Wexford. The best military opinion seems to have favoured the first. New Ross might, it is believed, at this time have been captured without opposition, and, by opening a communication with the disaffected in the counties of Waterford and Kilkenny, its possession would have given a great immediate extension to the rebellion. Both Barker and Hay advocated this course,[2] but they were overruled, and it was resolved to attack Wexford. That night the rebels advanced to a place called Three Rocks, the Wexford end of a long heather-clad mountain ridge called the Forth, which stretches across the plain to within about three miles of Wexford, commanding a vast view of the surrounding country. Father John led the way, bearing a crucifix in his hands. After him, the men of most influence seem to have been Edward Fitzgerald, Edward Roach, and John Hay. It is a curious and significant fact, that all these owed their ascendency mainly to their position among the landed gentry of the county.

General Fawcett had left Duncannon Fort with the promised succour on the evening of the 29th, but stopped short that night

[1] See the graphic descriptions of the camp at Vinegar Hill, in Cloney's *Personal Narrative*, and in Miles Byrne's *Memoirs*.

[2] Gordon, p. 117; Byrne, i. 66.

at Taghmon, about seven miles from Wexford. On the morning of the 30th, he sent forward a detachment of eighty-eight men with two howitzers. They seem to have advanced very incautiously, and as they passed under the Three Rocks, the rebel pikemen poured down fiercely upon them. The affray did not last more than fifteen minutes, and it was terribly decisive. The two cannon were taken. An ensign and sixteen privates were made prisoners. Every other soldier soon lay dead upon the ground. A cluster of thorn trees in an adjacent field still marks the spot where their bodies were collected and buried. General Fawcett, on hearing of the disaster, at once retreated with the remainder of his troops to Duncannon, leaving Wexford to its fate.

The Wexford garrison, who were ignorant of what had occurred, sallied out on the same day to the Three Rocks, hoping to disperse the rebels. They found, however, a force estimated at not less than 16,000 men, and they were received with a steady fire. They at once returned to Wexford, leaving Colonel Watson dead upon the field.

The alarm in Wexford was now extreme. Early on the morning of the 30th, the toll house and part of the bridge were found to be in flames, and there were great fears of an extensive conflagration. The town was not made for defence. Two-thirds of its inhabitants were Catholics, and could not be counted on; several yeomen deserted to the rebels, and among the remainder there was scarcely any discipline or subordination. Some desired to kill the prisoners in the gaol, and Bagenal Harvey was so much alarmed, that he climbed up a chimney, where he remained for some time concealed. If the insurgents had at once advanced and blocked the roads of retreat, especially that to Duncannon Fort, the whole garrison must have surrendered. Hay, who surveyed the situation with the eye of a practised soldier, implored them to do so,[1] but his advice was neglected, and it is, perhaps, scarcely to be wondered at, that a disorderly and inexperienced force like that of the rebels, having on this very day crushed one detachment and repulsed another, should have relaxed its efforts, and failed to act with the promptitude of a regular army under a skilful general. At Wexford a council

[1] Byrne's *Memoirs*, i. 76, 77; Cloney's *Personal Narrative*, p. 24.

of war was now hastily summoned, and it was decided that the town must be surrendered. Bagenal Harvey was prevailed on to write a letter to the rebels, stating that he and the other prisoners had been treated with all possible humanity, and were now at liberty, and imploring the insurgents to commit no massacre, to abstain from burning houses, and to spare their prisoners' lives. Two brothers of the name of Richards, who were known to be popular in the county, were sent to the rebels to negotiate a surrender. They tied white handkerchiefs round their hats as a sign of truce, brought some country people with them, and reached the rebel camp in safety. After some discussion and division, the rebels agreed to spare lives and property, but insisted that all cannon, arms, and ammunition should be surrendered. They detained one of the brothers as a hostage, and sent back the other with Edward Fitzgerald to Wexford to arrange the capitulation.

But long before they had arrived there, almost the whole garrison had fled from the town by the still open road to Duncannon Fort, leaving the inhabitants absolutely unprotected, but carrying with them their arms and ammunition. The yeomen, commanded by Colonel Colville, are said to have kept some order in the flight, but the other troops scattered themselves over the country, shooting peasants whom they met, burning cottages, and also, it is said, several Roman Catholic chapels.[1] In the town the quays, and every avenue leading to the waterside, were thronged with women and children, begging in piteous tones to be taken in the ships. One young lady, in her terror, actually threw herself into the sea, in order to reach a boat. The shipowners, who were chiefly Wexford men, or men from the neighbouring country, had promised to convey the fugitives to Wales, and received exorbitant fares; but when the town was occupied by the rebels, most of them betrayed their trust, and brought them back to the town.

It was, indeed, a terrible fate to be at the mercy of the vast, disorderly, fanatical rabble who now poured into Wexford. It was not surprising, too, that the rebels should have contended that faith had been broken with them; that Fitzgerald and Colclough had been sent on a sham embassy, merely in order to

[1] Gordon, p. 102; Burdy, p. 510; Cloney, p. 24; Hay, pp. 119, 120.

secure a period of delay, during which the garrison might escape with their arms. The inhabitants, however, either through sympathy or through a very pardonable policy, did all they could to conciliate their conquerors. Green handkerchiefs, flags, or branches of trees, were hung from every window, and most of the townsmen speedily assumed the green cockade, flung open their houses, and offered refreshment to the rebels. It was observed that many refused it, till the person who offered it had partaken of it himself, for there was a widespread rumour that the drink had been poisoned. The rebels, who had been sleeping for many nights without cover on the heather, presented a wild, savage, grotesque appearance. They were, most of them, in the tattered dress of the Irish labourer, distinguished only by white bands around their hats and by green cockades, but many were fantastically decorated with ladies' hats, bonnets, feathers, and tippets, taken from plundered country houses, while others wore portions of the uniform of the soldiers who had been slain. Their arms consisted chiefly of pikes, with handles from twelve to fourteen feet long, and sometimes, it is said, even longer. A few men carried guns. Many others had pitchforks, scrapers, currying knives, or old rusty bayonets fixed on poles. A crowd of women accompanied them on their march, shouting and dancing in the wildest triumph.[1]

On the whole, they committed far less outrage than might reasonably have been expected. Two or three persons, against whom they had special grudges, were murdered, and one of these lay dying all night on the bridge. Many houses were plundered, chiefly those which had been deserted by their owners, but no houses were burned, and there was at this time no general disposition to massacre, though much to plunder. In Wexford also, as at Enniscorthy, and elsewhere, the rebels abstained most remarkably from those outrages on women which in most countries are the usual accompaniment of popular and military anarchy. This form of crime has, indeed, never been an Irish vice, and the presence of many women in the camp contributed to prevent it. The rebels also were very tired, and, in spite of

[1] See the description in the *Narrative of Charles Jackson*, pp. 14, 15. Jackson, Cloney, and Hay were all present in Wexford when it was occupied by the rebels.

some intoxication, the streets of Wexford on the night of May 30 were hardly more disturbed than in time of peace.

A general search was made for arms and ammunition, but only a few barrels of gunpowder and a few hundred cartridges were found. Much exasperation was at first felt against those who had conducted the negotiation, which had enabled the garrison to escape, and the life of Fitzgerald seemed for a short time in danger, but he soon recovered his ascendency.[1] The gaol was thrown open, and Bagenal Harvey was not only released, but was also at once, by acclamation, appointed commander-in-chief. Few facts in the history of the rebellion are more curious or more significant than this. In Wexford, more than in any other part of Ireland, the rebellion became essentially popish, and the part played by religious fanaticism was incontestably great. Yet even here a Protestant landlord, of no brilliant parts or character, was selected by the triumphant rebels as their leader. Bagenal Harvey was the owner of a considerable property in the county, but, unlike most Irish landlords of independent means, he devoted himself to a profession, and had some practice at the bar. He was a humane, kindly, popular man, much liked by his tenants and neighbours, and long noted for his advanced political opinions. He had been a prominent United Irishman in 1793. He had been one of those who were commissioned to present a petition to the King against the recall of Lord Fitzwilliam in 1795, and he had been on all occasions an active advocate of the Catholic cause. He had fought several duels, and established a reputation for great personal courage, but he was absolutely without military knowledge or experience. His health was weak. His presence was exceedingly unimposing, and he had none of the magnetic or controlling qualities that are needed for the leader of a rebellion. Whether sympathy, or ambition, or the danger of resisting the summons of the fierce armed mob that surrounded him, induced him to accept the post, it is impossible to say. In the few weeks during which he exercised a feeble and precarious power, his main object was to prevent outrage and murder, and to give the struggle the character of regular war.

On the 31st the main body of the rebels quitted Wexford,

[1] Hay, p. 121.

leaving in it, however, a sufficient force to hold the town. The command of it was entrusted to another Protestant, Captain Matthew Keugh, a retired half-pay officer in the English army, who had served in the American war, and who was well known for his popular opinions. He divided the town into wards, and organised in each a company of men, armed with guns or pikes, who elected their own officers. A regular parade was established; guards were appointed and relieved, and a password was daily given. At first, self-appointed commissaries, under pretence of making requisitions, plundered houses indiscriminately, but a committee of twelve principal inhabitants was elected to regulate the requisition and distribution of food, and mere plunder appears then to have almost ceased. The new authorities resolved to punish it severely; they restored some plundered property, and they established public stores of provisions, from which every householder might obtain supplies gratuitously in proportion to the number of his household. Great quantities of provisions seem to have been brought in from the surrounding country, and there was no serious want. It was noticed that no money except coin was recognised, and that bank notes were often used to light pipes, or as wadding for the guns. All the able-bodied men were called upon to attend the camps, and there was a curious, childish desire for decoration. 'Most persons,' says a writer who was present, 'were desirous to wear ornaments of some kind or other, and accordingly decorated themselves in the most fantastical manner, with feathers, tippets, handkerchiefs, and all the showy parts of ladies' apparel.' Green was naturally the favourite colour, but banners of all colours except the hated orange now appeared, and the coloured petticoats of the women were largely employed in military decorations.[1]

On the whole, the better class of citizens succeeded in maintaining a precarious ascendency, but a few men from the humbler classes became captains. Of these, the most powerful was a former shoeblack, named Dick Munk, who had acquired much influence over the townsmen, and was now conspicuous from his green uniform with silver lace, his green helmet, and his white ostrich plume.[2] The leaders, however, were in a great degree in the hands of the mob, and the distinction between Catholic

[1] Hay, pp. 128–133. [2] Jackson's *Personal Narrative*, p. 35.

and Protestant was at once strongly accentuated. The houses around Wexford were everywhere searched to discover 'Orangemen.' All who harboured 'Orangemen' were threatened with death. Every Protestant who was not well known, and whose sympathies were not popular, lay under the suspicion of Orangism, and some hundreds were thrown into Wexford gaol or confined in the barracks. It was probably the best fate that could happen to them, for their lives would have been in great danger if they had been at large, and more than once crowds appeared at the prison door clamouring for their blood. Keugh, however, set himself steadily to prevent massacre, and he was nobly seconded by a man named William Kearney, to whom the care of the prisoners had been entrusted, and who showed himself a true gentleman, and a man of conspicuous humanity and courage.[1] Certificates were given to Protestants by Catholic neighbours, but especially by the Catholic bishops and clergy. Dr. Caulfield, the Catholic Bishop of Wexford, afterwards wrote a curious private letter to Archbishop Troy, describing the state of things during the rebel rule at Wexford, and he declares that there was not a Protestant in the town or in the surrounding country who did not come to the priests for protection, and that priests were employed from morning to night in endeavouring to secure them.[2] The leading inhabitants were extremely anxious that there should be no religious persecution, and they even desired that the Protestant worship should continue,[3] but there could be no doubt of the current of popular feeling. 'If you will go home and turn Christians,' the rebels were accustomed to say, 'you will be safe enough.' Old faithful Catholic servants in Protestant households came to their mistresses, imploring them to allow the parish priest to christen the family, as 'it would be the saving of them all.'[4] The chapels, both in Wexford and the

[1] Compare the grudging admission in Taylor's *History of the Rebellion in the County of Wexford*, p. 81, with the warm and striking testimony of Mrs. Adams, in her most interesting account of her experiences, appended to Croker's *Researches in the South of Ireland*, pp. 347–385. This narrative was written, without any view to publication, by the daughter of a Protestant country gentleman, who lived close to Wexford, and it is one of the most instructive pictures of the state of the county of Wexford during the rebellion.

[2] Plowden, ii. 750.

[3] Hay, p. 144. It did not, however, continue, and the Protestants who were not in confinement generally thought it advisable to attend the Catholic service.

[4] Croker, p. 364.

neighbourhood, and around Vinegar Hill, were crowded with Protestants, who sought to secure their lives, property, and liberty, by obtaining from the priests certificates of conformity.

Two Roman Catholics of the name of Murphy, who had given information at trials against United Irishmen, were seized, tried for this offence, and put to death. The executions were conducted with elaborate ceremony, which was evidently intended to invest them with a judicial character, and to distinguish them from acts of mob violence. A procession was formed; the Dead March was played; a black flag was hoisted, and when the place of execution was reached, all the people dropped on their knees in prayer. Either as a mark of ignominy, or more probably in order to baffle justice if the rebellion was defeated, Protestant prisoners were compelled to shoot the culprits.[1]

Roving bands of plunderers ranged unchecked through the surrounding country; the few loyalists and Protestants there, lived in constant alarm, and in the complete anarchy that prevailed, there was a boundless scope for the gratification of private malice and private greed. It must, however, be added that, among the many horrors which throw a lurid light on this portion of Irish history, there were many incidents that show human nature at its best. Examples of gratitude or affection shown by tenants to their landlords, by old servants to their masters, by poor men who had received in past time some little acts of charity and kindness from the rich, were very frequent. Protestant ladies sometimes passed unmolested, on missions of charity to their imprisoned relations, through great bodies of undisciplined pikemen, and poor women often risked their own lives to save those of wounded men or of fugitives.[2]

In the meantime, strenuous efforts were made to arm the people with pikes. Every forge in or near Wexford was em-

[1] Taylor, pp. 79, 80; Hay, p. 168. See, too, the curious description of Jackson (pp. 22, 23), who was compelled to take part in one of the executions.

[2] The reader will find some striking instances of this in Mrs. Adams's experience. This lady had an old and infirm father in the neighbourhood of Wexford to care for, and her brother (who lost his intellect from terror) was a prisoner in Wexford gaol. She says: 'I shall ever have reason to love the poor Irish for the many proofs of heart they have shown during this disturbed season; particularly as they were all persuaded into a belief, that they were to possess the different estates of the gentlemen of the county, and that they had only to draw lots for their possessions.' (Croker's *Researches in the South of Ireland*, p. 361.)

ployed in manufacturing them, and the Bull-ring at Wexford was filled with kitchen tables, which the carpenters were converting into pike handles. Old folios, which had long slumbered in the libraries of country houses, were now in much request, for it was found that it was possible to use their bindings as saddles. Three cannon were mounted in a position to command the harbour, and three oyster boats in the harbour were fitted out as cruisers. They succeeded in bringing in several vessels bound for Dublin with provisions, and also in making a capture which was of great importance. Lord Kingsborough, who commanded the North Cork Militia, was ignorant of the occupation of Wexford by the rebels, and was proceeding there by water, when on June 2 he was taken prisoner by one of the armed oyster boats, together with two of his officers, and was imprisoned as a hostage. Another somewhat important acquisition of the rebels, was a Protestant gentleman named Cornelius Grogan, of Johnstown. The inhabitants of his district rose to arms, and came to him asking him to be their leader, and he was either persuaded or coerced into accepting. He was an old, gouty, infirm man of little intelligence, but his assistance was important, as he was one of the largest landlords of the county, his estates being estimated at not less than 6,000*l.* a year. He rode at the head of his people into Wexford, with green banners flying before him, and amid great demonstrations of popular rejoicing. Two of his brothers were at this very time bearing arms on the side of the Government.

The whole of the south of the county, except Ross and Duncannon, was now in the hands of the rebels, and in the north extreme terror prevailed. The yeomanry cavalry who had escaped from Oulart Hill had fled to Gorey, and that little town was also crowded with fugitives from the country. A few yeomen and militia, who were collected there, tried to disarm the surrounding country, and they are accused by the historians on the rebel side of committing great atrocities, and slaughtering multitudes of unarmed and perfectly inoffensive people. I have myself little doubt that these charges are at least immensely exaggerated, but it was a time when an outbreak was hourly expected, and when there was no safe place for detaining prisoners, and in the panic and violence that prevailed, human life was little valued, and very summary executions undoubtedly

often followed very slight suspicions.[1] A rumour was spread that an overwhelming force was marching on Gorey, and early on the morning of the 28th the troops, accompanied by a crowd of fugitives, among whom was the historian Gordon, fled to Arklow, but the commanding officer there, apparently suspecting treachery, refused to admit this great miscellaneous multitude, and most of them passed the night under the hedges near the town. Gorey in the meantime was left absolutely unprotected. The few remaining inhabitants shut themselves up in their houses, but a mad or intoxicated woman danced frantically through the abandoned streets shouting in triumph, and her cries mingled with the mournful wail of a deserted pack of hounds which had been brought into the town by one of the fugitive gentry. There, too, 'six men who had been that morning, though unarmed, taken prisoners, shot through the body and left for dead in the street, were writhing with pain,' and it was noticed that one of these dying men, who was lying against a wall, though unable to speak, threatened with his fist a Protestant who had run back into the town for something he had forgotten. The road was strewn with gunpowder spilt by the retiring troops, and as a yeoman galloped by, it exploded under his horse's hoofs, scorching terribly both man and beast. A general plunder was feared, and a band of women assembled for that purpose, but some of the remaining inhabitants organised themselves into a guard; John Hunter Gowan, a magistrate of great courage and energy, though also, it is said, of great violence, collected a body of men

[1] Hay makes the most atrocious accusations against the yeomen about Gorey. He says, they fell upon 'the defenceless and unoffending populace, of whom they slew some hundreds;' that numbers who remained in their houses were called out, and shot at their own doors; that even infirm and decrepit men were among the victims; and that just before the evacuation of the town, 'eleven men, taken out of their beds within a mile's distance, were brought in and shot in the streets.' (*Insurrection of the County of Wexford*, pp. 133–135.) He describes, however, most of these massacres as the massacres of men who had assembled in bodies on the eminences, though (Hay says) without arms, and only for the purpose of seeing the attacks on houses &c. which were going on below Gordon, who lived close to Gorey, and had better means than any other historian of observing what went on there, acknowledges that the yeomen shot some of their prisoners before evacuating the town, but he gives no other support to these statements. He says that the people in the neighbourhood of Gorey were the last, and least violent of all, in the county of Wexford in rising against the established authority, which he attributes largely to the humane and conciliatory conduct of the Stopford family to their inferiors. (Gordon, p. 104.)

to secure the town, and on the 31st, the militia and yeomanry, who had abandoned it, returned and resumed their duty.[1]

On June 1, the rebels received a serious check. A body of some 4,000 of them, who appear to have been unconnected with those at Wexford, had assembled near Vinegar Hill, and attacked the village of Newtown-barry, where about 350 yeomen and militiamen were stationed, under the command of Colonel L'Estrange. The village lies on the western bank of the Slaney, about ten miles from Enniscorthy, and its capture would have opened a way to the county of Wicklow, where the conspiracy was widely spread. A priest of gigantic stature named Kearns led the rebels, and two or three other priests took prominent parts in the expedition. As they approached the village, they stopped, dropped on their knees and prayed. The rebels had one howitzer and some small swivels. Colonel L'Estrange feared to be surrounded by superior numbers, and he retired from the village, where, however, some loyalists continued to resist. The yeomen soon returned, found the rebels dispersed and pillaging through the streets, scattered them by a heavy fire of grape shot when they attempted to rally, and put them to flight with great loss. Two priests dressed in their sacerdotal vestments are said to have been among the dead.[2]

Several days passed before the formidable character of the rebellion in Wexford was fully known or fully realised. Among the most active correspondents of Pelham was a Northern magistrate named Henry Alexander, who appears at this time to have been employed at the Ordnance Office at Dublin, and who followed the course of the rebellion with great care. He was a strong politician, violently opposed to Grattan and Catholic emancipation, and his antipathies in some degree coloured his

[1] Gordon, pp. 106–108. Gordon praises greatly the activity of Gowan, and gives no support to the rebel statements about his barbarity.

[2] The attack on Newtown-barry is described with some difference of detail by Gordon (pp. 108, 109), Hay (pp. 137, 138), Musgrave (pp. 394, 395), Taylor (pp. 44–46), Byrne (i. 86–89). Byrne has the authority of an eye-witness, for he was with the rebel army in the attack, but his account does not appear to have been written till more than fifty years after, and was not published till 1863. He is especially anxious to contradict the statement of the other historians, that the rebels became generally intoxicated in Newtown-barry, and that this led to their defeat. Colonel L'Estrange estimated the rebels at not less than 10,000 or 15,000, and says that some 500 were killed. He says that his own force was only about 350 men. (See his letters, June 1 and 2, I.S.P.O.)

judgments, but he was evidently an acute and industrious man, with special means of information, and a long letter, which he wrote on June 3, throws some considerable light on the confused, scattered, and perplexing incidents of the earlier stages of the struggle. It is remarkable as showing the estimate which was then formed in Government circles of the nature and prospects of the rebellion, and also the small importance which was still attached to the events in Wexford.

He considered that the arrests at Bond's house, and the arrest of Lord Edward Fitzgerald, had the double effect of depriving the rebellion of all intelligent guidance, and of hastening its explosion. He had been present at the examination of a determined rebel officer, who stated that it had been the plan of the rebels to form large camps at Dunboyne, at Swords, and at the foot of the Wicklow mountains near the house of Mr. Latouche. The camp at Dunboyne had been successfully formed, but the meeting at Swords had been at once dispersed by the Fermanagh Militia, and the Wicklow rebels, who 'had proceeded to Rathfarnham to surprise the yeomanry, who were to have been betrayed to them by two of their own body (since convicted and executed, confessing their guilt),' had been defeated and driven into the mountains by Lord Roden and a party of the 5th Dragoons. A strong cordon now keeps them from the Lowlands. They have no common stock of provisions, and each man relies on what he has brought with him; 'their houses are marked, and their absence must be accounted for,' and unless they can effect a junction with the Wexford insurgents, want of food and want of covering must soon oblige them to surrender or disperse. 'Everywhere,' he says, 'there has been a great mixture of ferocious courage in their leaders, who have precipitated themselves on death, and a rabble of followers, who suffer with a stupid indifference. At Lord Rossmore's little town they had been nearly successful, although finally repulsed with considerable loss;' but though some of the Wicklow rebels are still very defiant, many are exceedingly the reverse, and Alexander believes that they would now accept almost any terms that would save their lives. In spite of the rebellion, Colonel Ogle had undertaken to raise one thousand yeomen in the county of Wicklow, and he was accomplishing his task without difficulty. In one

day, and from the small town of Bray alone, seventy recruits came in.

The assemblage at Dunboyne was very large, and the rebel force there was drawn from a large area extending as far as Drogheda. 'They have done much mischief, but are without any leader of consequence. Two gentlemen that were their prisoners assured me, their principal leader was a young man about twenty-two, the innkeeper's son of Lucan. He was killed at the fight of Tarragh [Tarah] Hill, leading his men very gallantly in full regimentals. A man of the name of Garrotty, a better kind of farmer, was next to him in command. In other respects each man did what he liked, and ranged himself under his local commander.' They had a surprising quantity and variety of arms; many more firearms than the Government had believed possible, and each recruit as he joined was given his choice of weapons. 'Their proceedings have not been as cruel and sanguinary as described, but they have been cruel to a great degree; neither have they outraged the chastity of the women, as reported. They have amongst their neighbours certainly made distinctions, and plundered and murdered individuals merely because they were Protestants.' This, however, was due to the ungovernable fury of the ignorant and priest-ridden part of the mob, and not at all to the directions of the leaders, who are not acting as a merely Catholic party would act, but who dare not punish outrages, who fear to alienate their supporters among the priests, and who have not ventured even to issue a manifesto, lest they should offend either the Presbyterians or the priests. Some of 'the lower priests' are taking a very leading and mischievous part in the movement, and 'the politicians are obliged to take colour from the religionists.'

It is still, Alexander thinks, quite uncertain which of two wholly different courses the rebellion will take. It may appeal to the ferocity of republicanism, and run along the lines of the French Revolution, and this would probably have been its course if the French had arrived, but it is more likely that it will assume a wholly different aspect, and appeal to a very different passion. It may become an outburst of 'the long and gradually ripened vengeance' which the 'lower Catholics' cherish against those who have invaded their temples, murdered their forefathers, and

appropriated their estates. This sentiment Alexander believes to be deep and ineradicable in Irish life, and the governing fact of Irish politics. 'The higher classes [of Catholics] are behaving well. Lord Fingall showed great personal gallantry at the battle of Tarragh. The King's County Militia, who behaved so well under L'Estrange, are almost all Catholics. Their bishops, and some of their noblemen and gentry, are coming forward with loyal addresses, but the great mass is decidedly against you. England judged of the Catholics by the few of the higher ranks they associated with. Conventional circumstances . . . may tie up the militia and their higher clergy, but as long as the property of the country exists, as long as the recollection of the Brehon law of gavelkind exists, and Irish names remain, so long will the lower Irish hope to regain what they think, whether justly or unjustly, their hereditary property. I have talked to many of their prisoners, and their only motive assigned for rising was to *make Ireland their own again*. All individuals, all political sentiments, were only, as they were taught to believe them, instrumental to that great end. . . . I am sure we deceive ourselves if we do not calculate upon that permanent source of Irish disturbances, whatever occasional circumstances may retard or accelerate its operation.'

'Troops,' he says, 'are impatiently expected from England; but if the administration, with the forces they have in Ireland, require aid to crush a rebellion confined to a corner of the country, woe be to this kingdom should the French land in force. Whenever the rebels have been fought with common judgment, let the disproportion of numbers be what it may, they have been beaten, except by the Cork Militia, who acted with great imprudence, and by Fawcett, whose conduct, as far as private letters state it, is most generally reprobated. Large bodies are forming round the rebels on every side, and all Dublin is sanguine in their expectations of their immediate destruction. Your troops are very keen, and the rebels indiscriminately massacring Protestant and Catholic soldiers, leaves no distinction in the military enthusiasm.' The general pardon, however, offered by Dundas to the Kildare rebels, was strongly reprobated among the supporters of the Government. 'If it was a capitulation, it was wrong. If it was mercy, it was misapplied, because the murderers of many of the military and others were in the

mass of pardoned men. A mercy so precipitate seemed no mercy to the friends of the sufferers, and . . . all Irish history teaches us, with Irish rebels, a negotiating Government proves the destruction of the English interest.' 'Little is known,' Alexander adds in a postscript, 'of the Wexford rebellion, except that their leaders behave more properly, and the men better conducted.'[1]

The Wexford rebellion, however, from its magnitude, and also from its sanguinary character, speedily became the centre of the scene, attracting to itself the rebel elements in the surrounding counties, and reducing all the other disturbances in Ireland almost to insignificance. Though the larger body of the rebel force that had captured Enniscorthy had proceeded to Wexford, and had chosen Bagenal Harvey as their commander, a considerable number still occupied the camp at Vinegar Hill, and they remained there from May 28 till the 20th of the following June. It was at this spot and during this time, that many of the most horrible crimes of the rebellion were committed. Vinegar Hill is the centre of a richly wooded and undulating country, watered by the Slaney, and bounded on the north and west by the blue line of the Wicklow hills. Enniscorthy lies at its foot, and an area of many miles is gaily interspersed with country houses and with prosperous farms Near the summit of the hill stood an old windmill. The mill no longer exists, but the lower part of its masonry still remains, forming a round, grey tower, about fifteen feet in diameter, which stands out conspicuously against the green grass, and is one of the most prominent objects to be seen from Enniscorthy. Scarcely any other spot in Ireland is associated with memories so tragical and so hideous. The country around was searched and plundered, and great numbers of Protestants were brought to the rebel camp, confined in the old windmill, or in a barn that lay at the foot of the hill, and then deliberately butchered. There appears indeed generally—though not always—to have been some form of trial, and although the victims were all or nearly all Protestants, they were not put to death simply for their creed. Many against whom no charge was brought, or who were popular among the people, or who could find some rebel to attest their innocence and

[1] Henry Alexander to Pelham, June 3, 1798. (*Pelham MSS.*)

their goodness, were dismissed in safety, with written protections from a priest. But all who had borne any part in the floggings, burnings, and other measures of repression that had been so frequent during the last few weeks; all who had shown themselves active or conspicuous on the loyalist side; all who were pronounced by the rebel tribunals to be Orangemen, were deliberately put to death. The belief which had been so industriously spread, that the Orangemen had sworn to exterminate the Catholics, had driven the people mad; and although in truth there were scarcely any Orangemen in Wexford, although until shortly before the rebellion, religious dissension had been very slight,[1] every Protestant of zeal and earnestness now fell under suspicion. Some were shot, some were piked to death, many were flogged in imitation of the proceedings of the yeomen and in order to elicit confessions of Orangism, and there were ghastly tales of prolonged and agonising deaths.

These rest, it is true, on scanty and somewhat dubious evidence, but of the blackness of the tragedy there can be no question. The dead bodies of many Protestants were left unburied, to be devoured by the swine or by the birds. Some were thrown into the river. Some were lightly covered over with sand. One man, who had been stunned, and pierced with a pike, was thrown into a grave while still alive, but a faithful dog scraped away the earth that covered him, and licked his face till he revived, and some passers-by drew him from the grave, sheltered him in their house, and tended him till he recovered. How many perished on Vinegar Hill, it is impossible to say. Musgrave, the most violent

[1] One of the Wexford rebels, before his execution, made a confession, which was formally attested, in which he said: 'Every man that was a Protestant was called an Orangeman, and every one was to be killed, from the poorest man in the country. Before the rebellion, I never heard there was any hatred between Roman Catholics and Protestants; they always lived peaceably together. I always found the Protestants better masters and more indulgent landlords than my own religion.' (Musgrave, Appendix, p. 100.) This statement, however, may be qualified by a passage in a letter written to the Duke of Richmond by Lady Louisa Conolly, who was an exceedingly good judge of the state of Ireland. She said: 'I still think that it [the rebellion] does not proceed from a religious cause, such numbers of the greatest and best Catholics are so unhappy about it, behave so well, and take such pains to discountenance anything of the kind. At Wexford there has, so far back as thirty-six years, to my knowledge, existed a violent Protestant and Catholic party; consequently these engines were set to work for the purpose of rebellion. In other places that of electioneering parties, and so on; every means has been seized that could answer their design.' (MS. letter, June 18, 1798.)

of the Protestant loyalist historians, estimates the number at more than five hundred. Gordon, the most moderate, says that unquestionable evidence proves that it can have been little less than four hundred. The Catholic historians usually confine themselves to vague generalities, and to paralleling these atrocities with the massacres of prisoners by the yeomen and the soldiers at Carnew, Dunlavin, and Gorey.[1]

The proceedings on Vinegar Hill were largely directed by priests. Many of them were collected there. The mass was daily celebrated, and fierce sermons sustained the fanaticism of the people. A hot, feverish atmosphere of religious excitement prevailed, and there was a ghastly mixture of piety and murder. It was observed that religious hatred, industriously inflamed by accounts of intended massacres of Catholics by Orangemen, played here a much more powerful part than any form of political or civil rancour, and it was often those who were most scrupulously observant of the ceremonials of their religion, who were the most murderous.[2] All the resources of superstition were at the same time employed to stimulate the courage of the rebels. Father John Murphy was especially looked upon as under Divine protection, and it was believed that he was invulnerable, and could catch the bullets in his hand. Numbers of Protestants around Vinegar Hill sought safety and protection by conforming, and it must be added, that not a few others appear to have been saved by the intervention of the priests. Some of those who thus escaped, were afterwards in imminent danger of being hanged by the soldiers, who regarded their release by the rebels as a strong presumption of their guilt.[3]

There were curious varieties in the treatment of Protestants. In large districts, every house belonging to a Protestant was burnt to the ground, but in others they were little molested. Gordon notices that the parish of Killegny, five miles from Enniscorthy, fell completely into the hands of the rebels, the Protestants in it having all been surrounded before they were able to escape. Yet not a single house in this parish was burnt, or a single Protestant killed. He attributes this chiefly 'to their

[1] Numerous depositions by prisoners, who had been taken to Vinegar Hill but spared, will be found, in Musgrave's Appendix. See, too, Gordon, pp. 139–142; Taylor, pp. 96–108; Hay, pp. 167, 168.

[2] Gordon, pp. 139, 195, 206, 218.

[3] Ibid. p. 140.

temporising conformity with the Romish worship, and to the very laudable conduct of the parish priest, Father Thomas Rogers, who, without any hint of a wish for their actual conversion, encouraged the belief of it among his bigoted flock.' The Protestant clergyman and his family were brought into the Romish chapel, to purge themselves from the imputation of being Orangemen, but they were afterwards suffered to remain unmolested, and when they were in want, the parish priest sent them provisions.[1]

The two immediate objects of the Wexford rebels were, the capture of Gorey and of New Ross. Like the attack on Newtown-barry, these expeditions were intended to open out a communication to other counties, and thus to produce that general insurrection throughout Ireland without which the Wexford rebellion was manifestly hopeless. On June 1, a body of rebels, variously estimated at from 1,000 to 4,000 men, many of them on horseback, advanced upon Gorey from Corrigrua Hill, where Bagenal Harvey had pitched his camp, burning many houses in their seven miles' march. Lieutenant Elliot, with three troops of yeomanry cavalry, fifty yeomanry infantry, and forty men of the Antrim and North Cork Militia, encountered them near the town, and by a steady and well-directed fire completely routed them. The rebel fire, in this as in most other conflicts of the struggle, coming from men who were totally unacquainted with the use of firearms, went far above the troops, and only three men were killed. The victorious army abstained from pursuit, but burnt many houses in a neighbouring village, which were said to belong to rebels, and then retired to Gorey, bringing with them more than 100 captured horses, some arms, and two green flags.[2]

[1] Gordon, pp. 141–143. Gordon soon after succeeded this clergyman as Rector of Killegny, and was therefore well acquainted with the circumstances of the parish. He says that there were signs that, if the rebellion had lasted, the immunity of the Protestants of this parish would not have lasted, and that a few of those who conformed to Catholicism during the rebellion, in order to save their lives, continued in that creed, 'probably through fear of a second insurrection.' It appears from one of the affidavits, that the rebels were sometimes contented if their prisoners consented to cross themselves, as this was considered a proof that at least they were not Orangemen. (Musgrave, Appendix, pp. 118, 119.)

[2] Gordon, pp. 112, 113; Taylor, pp. 47, 48. Gordon was himself near this battle, and his son appears to have been engaged in it. He says: 'A small occurrence after the battle, of which a son of mine was a witness, may help to illustrate the state of the country at that time. Two yeomen, coming to a brake or clump of bushes, and observing a small motion, as if some persons were hiding there, one of them fired into it, and the shot was answered by a most piteous and

The rebels, however, did not abandon their enterprise, and it was determined to renew it with a greatly increased force. A large part of the men on Vinegar Hill went to the camp on Corrigrua Hill, and on Sunday, June 3, a great force was marshalled there, in preparation for an attack on Gorey, which was intended for the morrow. On the same day, General Loftus arrived at Gorey, with a force of 1,500 men and five pieces of artillery. Though the reinforcement consisted almost entirely of militia and yeomanry,[1] it was believed that the loyalist force would be amply sufficient to surround and capture the rebel camp on Corrigrua Hill, and thus to crush the rebellion on this side of Wexford. About ten o'clock on the morning of the 4th, the troops marched from Gorey in two divisions, commanded respectively by General Loftus and Colonel Walpole. They moved along two different roads, for the purpose of attacking the hill on opposite sides, General Loftus taking the road to the left, and Colonel Walpole that to the right.

Early on the same morning, the insurgents had started on their march for Gorey. Before their departure, mass was celebrated, and the priests distributed the ball cartridges. Unlike the loyalists, they had thrown out scouts, and they soon discovered the approach of the division of Walpole. This officer, though a favourite at the Castle, was totally inexperienced in actual war, and was blinded, like many others during the rebellion, by his contempt for the rebels. As he now advanced heedlessly through narrow lanes flanked by high hedges, he was suddenly attacked by a powerful rebel force under the command of Father John Murphy. A storm of grape shot failed to disperse the assailants. Walpole was shot dead. His troops were driven back with serious loss. They fled in disorder to Gorey; rushed hastily through its streets under the fire of rebels, who had taken possession of some of the houses, and did not pause in their retreat till they reached Arklow. Three cannon were taken, and at least fifty-four men were killed or missing. Among the officers

loud screech of a child. The other yeoman was then urged by his companion to fire; but he, being a gentleman and less ferocious, instead of firing, commanded the concealed persons to appear; when a poor woman and eight children, almost naked—one of whom was severely wounded—came trembling from the brake, where they had secreted themselves for safety.' (P. 113.)

[1] See Taylor, p. 49.

who were slightly wounded was Captain Armstrong, the accuser of the Sheares's.

General Loftus had heard from a distance the noise of battle; he sent some seventy men across country to support Walpole, and a second disastrous fight took place. Loftus could not bring his artillery across the fields, but at length by a circuitous road he reached the scene of conflict, where he found the dead body of Walpole, and evident signs of the defeat of his division.[1] He followed the rebel army towards Gorey, found it at last strongly posted on a hill that commands that town, and was met by a fire from the cannon which had been taken. Feeling himself unable either to take the post or to pass under it into the town, he hastily retreated to Carnew in the county of Wicklow, and thence to Carlow, leaving a great tract of country at the mercy of the rebels.[2]

If these, instead of stopping for some days at Gorey, had pressed immediately on, raising the country as they went, there would have been little or nothing, in the opinion of a competent judge, to check them between Wicklow and Dublin.[3] The loyalists of Gorey, who had expected complete security from the arrival of Loftus, now fled in wild confusion with the retreating troops to Arklow, leaving their property behind them. In the town there was some plunder and much drinking. About a hundred prisoners were released. Cattle were killed for the rebel camp in such numbers, and so wastefully, that the remains which were strewn about would probably have caused a pestilence, if one of the inhabitants of Gorey had not come daily to carry off and bury the hides and offal. Many men came in from the surrounding country. Orders are said to have been given, that all persons harbouring Protestants should bring them in on pain of death, and it is stated that the rebels 'shot several Protestants whom they had taken in their different marches.'[4] It is more

[1] Compare Byrne's *Memoirs*, i. 97–101; Gordon, pp. 114–116; Hay, pp. 49–51. Byrne was present in the action, and his account differs in some respects from that of the other historians. He represents Walpole as having been killed in the second fight. All the other accounts place his death at the beginning of the conflict.

[2] Gordon, Taylor, Byrne, Hay.

[3] See the extracts from the 'Journal of a Field Officer' quoted in Maxwell's *History of the Rebellion*, pp. 112, 115. Byrne, however, gives reasons for thinking that an immediate march on Arklow would have been imprudent (i. 114).

[4] This is stated by Taylor (pp. 51, 52) and Musgrave (p. 406); and the

certain, that they sent out parties to burn the houses of Gowan and two or three other magistrates who were obnoxious to them.

While these things were happening at Gorey, a much larger body under the command of Bagenal Harvey attempted to take New Ross. Adopting their usual precaution of encamping always on a height, they passed from Wexford to their old quarters on the Three Rocks; thence on June 1 to Carrickbyrne Hill, which is about seven miles from New Ross, and then on the 4th to Corbet Hill, which is within a mile of that town. A few days before, they might probably have occupied it without resistance, thus opening a path into Carlow; but General Johnston was now there, at the head of at least 1,400 men, including 150 yeomen. His force was composed of the Dublin Militia under Lord Mountjoy, with detachments from the 5th Dragoons, the Clare, Donegal, and Meath Militia, the Mid-Lothian Fencibles, and some English artillery. At daybreak on the 5th the insurgents were ready for the attack, but Harvey first endeavoured to save bloodshed by sending a summons to the commander, representing the overwhelming numbers of the assailants, and summoning him to surrender the town, and thus save from total ruin the property it contained. A man named Furlong, bearing a flag of truce, undertook to carry the message, but as he approached he was shot dead, and his pockets rifled. Few incidents in the rebellion did more to exasperate the rebels, and there is reason to believe that it was no misadventure, but a deliberate act.[1]

The battle that ensued was the most desperate in the rebellion. The insurgents advanced at daybreak, driving before them

'Field Officer' cited by Maxwell says: 'Time was wasted in collecting and piking Protestants, which might have been employed with far greater advantage to the cause.' On the other hand, nothing is said about these executions by Byrne, who was present in the expedition, or by Gordon, who was most intimately acquainted with Gorey. Hay says that, before the capture of Gorey, the military stationed there 'plundered and burned many houses, and shot several stragglers who happened to fall in their way. This provoked the insurgents to vie with their opponents in this mode of warfare, and . . . enormities, in fact, were committed on both sides.' (P. 146.) Byrne and Hay pretend that the troops intended to kill their prisoners in Gorey, and were only prevented by the rapidity with which they were driven through the town. It seems to me quite impossible to pronounce with confidence on these points.

[1] Gordon says: 'To shoot all persons carrying flags of truce from the rebels, appears to have been a maxim with his Majesty's forces.' (P. 118.)

a quantity of black cattle to break the ranks of the troops, and they were received with a steady fire of grape. 'At near seven o'clock,' says an eye-witness who was with General Johnston, 'the army began to retreat in all directions. . . . The rebels pouring in like a flood, artillery was called for, and human blood began to flow down the street. Though hundreds were blown to pieces by our grape shot, yet thousands behind them, being intoxicated from drinking during the night and void of fear, rushed upon us. The cavalry were now ordered to make a charge through them, when a terrible carnage ensued. They were cut down like grass, but the pikemen being called to the front, and our swords being too short to reach them, obliged the horses to retreat, which put us into some confusion. We kept up the action till half-past eight, and it was maintained with such obstinacy on both sides that it was doubtful who would keep the field. They then began to burn and destroy the town. It was on fire in many places in about fifteen minutes. By this time the insurgents advanced as far as the main guard, where there was a most bloody conflict, but with the assistance of two ship guns placed in the street, we killed a great number and kept them back for some time.'[1] They soon, however, rallied, and by their onward sweep bore down the artillerymen, and obtained possession of the guns. Lord Mountjoy, at the head of the Dublin County Regiment, then charged them, and a fierce hand-to-hand fight ensued, but the troops were unable to pierce the ranks of the pikemen. Lord Mountjoy was surrounded and fell, and his soldiers fiercely fighting were driven back by the overwhelming weight of the enemy, and at last crossed the bridge to the Kilkenny side of the river, where, however, they speedily rallied. Mountjoy was the first member of either House of Parliament who had fallen in this disastrous struggle, and it was bitterly noticed by the ultra-Protestant party, that he was the Luke Gardiner who had been one of the warmest friends of the Catholics, and who twenty years before had introduced into the House of Commons the first considerable measure for their relief.[2]

[1] Taylor, pp. 56, 57.

[2] On the death of Mountjoy, see the account by an eye-witness in Taylor, pp. 57, 58. General Johnston, in the official bulletin, says he 'fell early in the contest.' Major Vesey says: 'He was wounded and taken prisoner early. When we stormed their fort, we found his body mangled and butchered.'

The town seemed now almost lost, and some of the troops in wild panic fled to Waterford. If indeed all the resources of the rebels had been exerted, nothing could have saved it. But though the insurgents were the raw material out of which some of the best soldiers in the British army have been formed; though they showed a desperate and truly admirable courage, in facing for long hours the charge of cavalry and bayonets, the volleys of disciplined soldiers, and even the storm of grape shot, they were in truth but untrained, ignorant, poverty-stricken, half-armed peasants, most of whom had never before seen a shot fired in war. Bagenal Harvey had ordered a simultaneous attack on the town in three quarters, but the men who rushed into it, infuriated by the death of Furlong, kept no discipline and acted on no plan. A large part, it is said indeed the great majority, of the insurgents remained at Corbet Hill, and never descended to share the dangers of their fellows, and even of those who had taken the town, a multitude soon dispersed through the streets to plunder or to drink. General Johnston succeeded in rallying his troops, and placing himself at their head, he once more charged the insurgents. A well-directed fire from the cannon which had not been taken, cleared his way, and after desperate fighting the town was regained, and the cannon recaptured and turned against the rebels. Johnston himself displayed prodigies of valour, and three horses were shot under him.

Still, the day was far from over. 'The gun I had the honour to command,' writes the eye-witness I have quoted, 'being called to the main guard, shocking was it to see the dreadful carnage that was there. It continued for half an hour obstinate and bloody. The thundering of cannon shook the town; the very windows were shivered in pieces with the dreadful concussion. I believe 600 rebels lay dead in the main street. They would often come within a few yards of the guns. One fellow ran up, and taking off his hat and wig, thrust them up the cannon's mouth the length of his arm, calling to the rest, "Blood-an'-'ounds! my boys, come take her now, she's stopt, she's stopt!" The action was doubtful and bloody from four in the morning to four in the evening, when they began to give way in all quarters.... I know soldiers that fired 120 rounds of ball, and I fired twenty-one rounds of canister shot with the field piece I commanded.'[1]

[1] Taylor, pp. 58, 59.

Some striking figures stand out amid the confused struggle in the town. In the hottest of the fire, a religious enthusiast was seen among the insurgents bearing aloft a crucifix, and though the bullets and grape shot fell fast and thick, many a rebel paused for a moment before he charged, to kneel down and kiss it. A woman named Doyle, the daughter of a faggot cutter, seemed to those who observed her to bear a charmed life. She moved to and fro where the battle raged most fiercely, cutting with a small bill-hook the belts of the fallen soldiers, and supplying the insurgents with cartridges from their cartouches. At the end of the battle, when the rebels were in retreat and about to abandon a small cannon, she took her stand beside it, and said she would remain to be shot unless there was courage enough among the fugitives to save it, and she rallied a small party, who carried it from the field. One soldier was noticed, who with reckless daring disdained any shelter or concealment, and stood conspicuous on the wall of a burning cabin, whence with cool, unerring aim, he shot down rebel after rebel. At last the inevitable shot struck him, and he fell backwards into the still smoking ruins. A townsman named McCormick, who had once been in the army, donned a brazen helmet, and was one of the most conspicuous in the loyalist ranks. Again and again, when the soldiers flinched beneath the heavy fire and fled to shelter, he drew them out, rallied them and led them against the enemy. His wife was worthy of him. When at the beginning of the battle all the other inhabitants fled across the bridge into the county of Kilkenny, she alone remained, and employed herself during the whole battle in mixing wine and water for the soldiers. A boy named Lett, who was said to have been only thirteen, had run away from his mother and joined the insurgents. At a critical moment he snatched up a green banner, and a great body of pikemen followed him in a charge. Another young boy who was in the rebel ranks, may be noticed on account of the future that lay before him. He was John Devereux of Taghmon, who afterwards rose to fame and fortune in South America, and became one of the most distinguished generals in the service of Bolivar.[1]

[1] Many interesting particulars of this battle, from an eye-witness on the rebel side, will be found in Cloney's *Personal Narrative*; and from an eye-witness on the loyalist side, in Taylor.

At last, the insurgents broke and fled. The flight was terrible, for it was through streets of burning and falling houses, and many are said to have perished in the flames. The streets of Ross, General Johnston reported, were literally strewn with the carcases of the rebels.[1] 'The carnage,' wrote Major Vesey, 'was shocking, as no quarter was given. The soldiers were too much exasperated, and could not be stopped. It was a fortunate circumstance,' he adds, 'for us that early in the night a man ran in from their post to acquaint us that it was their intention to attack us, and that they were resolved to conquer or die, and so in fact they acted.'[2] In the first excited estimates, the loss of the insurgents was reckoned at seven thousand men. According to the best accounts, it was about two thousand. The loss on the loyalist side was officially reckoned at two hundred and thirty men.

The battle of New Ross was still raging, when a scene of horror was enacted at Scullabogue barn, which has left an indelible mark on Irish history. The rebels had in the last few days collected many prisoners, and though some are said to have been put to death, the great majority were kept under guard near the foot of Carrickbyrne mountain, where the camp had lately been, in a lonely and abandoned country house called Scullabogue and in the adjoining barn. The number of the prisoners is stated in the Protestant accounts to have been two hundred and twenty-four, though the Catholic historians have tried to reduce it to eighty or a hundred. They were left under the guard of three hundred rebels. The accounts of what happened are not

[1] Report of General Johnston, inclosed by Camden to Portland, June 8, 1798.

[2] Record Office. Hay declares that there was not only an indiscriminate massacre when New Ross was taken, but that on 'the following day also, the few thatched houses that remained unburnt . . . were closely searched, and not a man discovered in them left alive. Some houses set on fire were so thronged, that the corpses of the suffocated within them could not fall to the ground, but continued crowded together in an upright posture, until they were taken out to be interred.' (P. 155.) How far such stories were true, and how far they were inventions or exaggerations, intended to parallel the massacre of Scullabogue, it is impossible to say. Madden collected some stories about the capture of New Ross, from two old men who had been there, and their account went to show that there had been very general massacre, but that it had been immediately after the capture. He says, they agreed 'that, after the battle was entirely over, as many were shot and suffocated in the burning cabins and houses from four o'clock in the afternoon till night, and were hanged the next day, as were killed in the fight.' (*United Irishmen*, iv. 445.)

quite consistent in their details, but it appears that in an early stage of the battle, a party of runaways from the camp reached Scullabogue, declaring that the rebel army at New Ross was cut off; that the troops were shooting all prisoners, and butchering all the Catholics who fell into their hands; that orders had been issued that the prisoners at Scullabogue should be at once slaughtered; and that a priest had given peremptory instructions to that effect. The leader of the rebel guard is said to have at first hesitated and resisted, but his followers soon began the work of blood. Thirty-seven prisoners who were confined in the house were dragged out, and shot or piked before the hall door. The fate of those who were in the barn was more terrible. The rebels surrounded it and set it on fire, thrusting back those who attempted to escape, with their pikes, into the flames. Three only by some strange fortune escaped. It is said that one hundred and eighty-four persons perished in the barn by fire or suffocation, and that twenty of them were women and children. The immense majority were Protestants, but there were ten or fifteen Catholics among them. Some of these appear to have been wives of North Cork Militia men, and some others, Catholic servants who had refused to quit their Protestant masters.[1]

By this time the Irish Government, which had been at first disposed to look with contempt and almost with gratification at the outbreak of the rebellion, were thoroughly alarmed. Pelham was ill in England, but he received constant information from Ireland, and his confidential correspondence shows clearly the growing sense of danger.

On June 1, Elliot wrote to him, sending bulletins of the various actions between the King's troops and the rebels, 'in all of which,' he writes, 'the former have manifested the highest spirit and intrepidity, and the most inviolable fidelity, and I cannot help adding, that the zeal and alertness of the yeomanry have contributed most essentially to the security of the metropolis. The news to-day is not pleasant. The rebels are in considerable force in the county of Wexford, and are in possession of the

[1] Compare Gordon, pp. 121, 122; Taylor, pp. 64–70; Hay, pp. 156–159; Cloney, pp. 44, 45. Among modern books, the reader may consult the rebel historian Harwood's *History of the Rebellion*, p. 184. Taylor gives the names of ninety-five persons who were killed at Scullabogue, and he says there were others whose names he could not discover.

town, and General Fawcett, in marching with a body of troops from Waterford towards Wexford, has been obliged to retreat with the loss of several men and a howitzer. . . . The provinces of Ulster and Munster are at present in a state of tranquillity. . . . If Lord Edward Fitzgerald and the other leading traitors had not been apprehended, I am persuaded we should have had at this moment to encounter a very formidable and widely diffused rebellion. Troops from England are absolutely necessary, and I hope the succour will be speedy. Our army is so disposed that it is difficult to bring it together; and if a foreign enemy were in the country, we should have a fatal experience of the truth of Sir Ralph Abercromby's prediction, that a body of 5,000 men might cut off our troops in detail. My greatest apprehension at present is a *religious war*. In *my own opinion*, the evil which has resulted from the Orange Association is almost irreparable, and yet I am afraid Government will be compelled, or at least will think itself compelled, to resort, in the present emergency, to that description of force for assistance. At the same time, the Lord Lieutenant and Lord Castlereagh endeavour to repress the religious distinctions as much as possible.'[1]

Two days later Lord Camden wrote: 'The North and South continue quiet, and the formidable part of the rebellion is now confined to Wexford. . . . The cruelties the rebels have committed are dreadful, and the religious appearance which the war now bears is most alarming. Whenever our troops have had opportunities of meeting the rebels, they have behaved well, but their wildness and want of discipline is most alarming, looking as we must do to a more formidable enemy.'[2] Elliot stated that the war in Wexford had 'certainly assumed a strong religious spirit.' Lord Fingall and the leading Catholic gentry, he added, were quite sensible of the danger, and had presented a most admirable address, but the rebels would undoubtedly fan the flame of religious dissension, and the intemperance of Protestants was assisting them. 'The contest,' he said, 'is yet by no means decided; but if the rebels should not have the co-operation of a French army, I trust we shall put them down. If the French should be able to throw a force of 5,000 men on any

[1] Elliot to Pelham, June 1, 1798. (*Pelham MSS.*)
[2] Camden to Pelham, June 3, 1798.

part of our coast, it would render the result very dubious.' He at the same time expressed his total want of confidence in the abilities of Lake, who, 'though a brave, cool, collected man, extremely obliging, and pleasant in the transaction of business,' 'has not resources adequate to the critical situation in which he is placed.' 'The loss of Abercromby,' continued Elliot, 'will not easily be repaired.'[1]

On the 5th, before the news of the battle of New Ross arrived, Camden wrote to England in very serious and explicit terms. He relates that two attacks on the Wexford rebels had been defeated. The North, he says, may possibly be kept quiet, but this 'wholly depends upon a speedy end being put to the rebellion near Dublin. It is therefore,' he continues, 'my duty to state it to your Grace as a point of indispensable necessity, as one on which the salvation of Ireland depends, that this rebellion should be instantly suppressed. No event but an instant extinction can prevent its becoming general, as it is notorious that the whole country is organised, and only waiting until the success of one part of the kingdom is apparent, before the other parts begin their operations. The Chancellor, the Speaker, Sir John Parnell, and all those friends of his Majesty's Government whom I am in the habit of consulting, have this day thought it incumbent on them to give it as their solemn opinion, and have requested me to state it as such, that the salvation of Ireland depends upon immediate and very considerable succour, that a few regiments will perhaps only be sent to slaughter or to loss, but that a very formidable force of many thousand men, sent forthwith, will probably save the kingdom, which will not exist without such a support. I feel myself that their opinion is perfectly well founded, I add to it my own, and I must add that General Lake agrees with these gentlemen and me in the absolute necessity of this reinforcement.' He asks, accordingly, for at least 10,000 men.[2]

In a more confidential letter which was written next day to Pelham, the Lord Lieutenant informs his Chief Secretary that he had stated both to Portland and Pitt his decided opinion, 'that unless a very large force is immediately sent from England, the

[1] Elliot to Pelham, June 3, 1798.
[2] Camden to Portland, June 5, 1798.

country may be lost.' He expressed his deep conviction, that Lake was not a man of sufficient ability or authority for his present position, and he adds an important recommendation, which he had apparently already sent to Pitt. 'The Lord Lieutenant ought to be a military man. The whole government of the country is now military, and the power of the chief governor is almost merged in that of the general commanding the troops. I have suggested the propriety of sending over Lord Cornwallis, . . . and I have told Pitt . . . that without the best military assistance, I conceive the country to be in the most imminent danger, and that my services cannot be useful to the King. . . . A landing, even of a small body of French, will set the country in a blaze, and I think neither our force nor our staff equal to the very difficult circumstances they will have to encounter.' In Kildare he hopes that the spirit of the rebels is broken, but 'the county of Wexford is a terrible example of their fury and licentiousness. . . . Great impatience is entertained, from no regiments having arrived from England, and indeed, it is mortifying to think that we have not received a man, although the rebellion has lasted for a fortnight.'[1]

The battle of New Ross was a loyalist victory, but the extraordinary resolution and courage shown by the insurgents greatly increased the alarm. 'Although the spirit and gallantry of his Majesty's army,' wrote Camden, 'finally overcame the rebels, your Grace will learn how very formidable are their numbers, led on as they are by desperation and enthusiasm. . . . Major Vesey, who commanded the Dublin County Regiment after the melancholy fate of Lord Mountjoy, describes the attack

[1] Camden to Pelham, June 6. Lord Clare, who was never disposed to panic, took an equally grave view. The day after Walpole's defeat, he wrote: 'Our situation is critical in the extreme. We know that there has been a complete military organisation of the people in three-fourths of the kingdom. In the North, nothing will keep the rebels quiet but a conviction that, where treason has broken out, the rebellion is merely popish; but, even with this impression on their minds, we cannot be certain that their love of republicanism will not outweigh their inveteracy against popery. In the capital there is a rebel army organised; and if the garrison was forced out, to meet an invading army from this side of Wexford, they would probably, on their return, find the metropolis in possession of its proper rebel troops. In a word, such is the extent of treason in Ireland, that if any one district is left uncovered by troops, it will be immediately possessed by its own proper rebels. . . . I have long foreseen the mischief, and condemned the imbecility which has suffered it to extend itself.' (*Auckland Correspondence*, iv. 3.)

which was made as the most furious possible. . . . Our force was obliged twice to retire; they were, however, finally successful, but they were so harassed and fatigued as not to be able to make any forward movement, and your Grace will observe how very formidable an enemy Colonel Crawford, who has been so long accustomed to all descriptions of service, states the rebels to be.'[1]

The letters of Colonel Crawford and Major Vesey were inclosed, and they fully bear out Camden's estimate of the seriousness of the crisis. 'The insurgents,' wrote the first officer, 'yesterday marched from Carrickburne to within a mile and a half of this place. This morning General Johnston was about giving orders for advancing against them, when *they* did it, and made as severe an attack as is possible for any troops with such arms. They were in great force, not many firearms, and no guns at first. They drove in our right, followed the troops quite into the town, and got possession of four guns. By *very great* personal exertion of General Johnston they were repulsed, and the repeated attacks they afterwards made (being far less vigorous than the first) were beaten back, and the guns retaken. They certainly have given proofs of very extraordinary courage and enthusiasm, and it is, in my opinion, very doubtful that the force at present under General Johnston would be able to subdue the Wexford insurgents. Should it spread now, it would be very serious indeed. . . . The militia behaved with spirit, but are quite ungovernable.'[2]

'These men,' wrote Beresford, 'inflamed by their priests, who accompany them in their ranks, fight with a mad desperation. It is becoming too apparent that this is to be a religious, bloody war. We must conceal it as long as we can, because a

[1] Camden to Portland, June 8, 1798.

[2] Colonel Crawford, June 5. Two days later the same officer wrote to General Cradock, that before the attack on New Ross he had so 'contemptible an opinion of the rebels as troops,' that he thought the best plan would be to divide the army into small columns, and beat them in detail. 'But,' he says, 'I have now totally changed my opinion. I never saw any troops attack with more enthusiasm and bravery than the rebel did on the 5th. . . . To insure success we must be in considerable force. Should we be defeated, a general insurrection would probably be the consequence. During the affair of the 5th inst., large bodies of people collected behind us in the county of Kilkenny, and certainly were waiting only the event of the attack made by the people of Wexford. In short, I do not think General Johnston's and General Loftus's corps, even when united, sufficiently strong not nearly so.' (June 7, Record Office.)

great part of our army and most of our militia are papists, but it cannot be long concealed. . . . If the militia should turn or the French come before the contest is ended and the rebellion crushed, Ireland goes first, and Great Britain follows, and all Europe after.' 'The only comfort we have is, that the Northern Protestants begin to see their danger, and are arming in our favour, but . . . Government are afraid to trust them, lest the papists of the militia and army should take affront.'[1]

Castlereagh was acting as Chief Secretary during the illness of Pelham, and though he was by no means inclined to exaggerate danger, he took an equally grave view of the situation. 'The rebellion in Wexford,' he wrote, 'has assumed a more serious shape than was to be apprehended from a peasantry, however well organised.' 'An enemy that only yielded after a struggle of twelve hours is not contemptible. Our militia soldiers have, on every occasion, manifested the greatest spirit and fidelity, in many instances defective subordination, but in none have they shown the smallest disposition to fraternity, but, on the contrary, pursue the insurgents with the rancour unfortunately connected with the nature of the struggle. Had the rebels carried Ross, the insurrection would have immediately pervaded the counties of Waterford and Kilkenny.' Their forces 'consist of the entire male inhabitants of Wexford, and the greatest proportion of those of Wicklow, Kildare, Carlow, and Kilkenny. From Carlow to Dublin, I am told, scarcely an inhabitant is to be seen. I am sorry to inform you, that our fears about the North are too likely to be realised. . . . Rely on it, there never was in any country so formidable an effort on the part of the people. It may not disclose itself in the full extent of its preparation if it is early met with vigour and success, but our forces cannot cope in a variety of distant points with an enemy that can elude an attack when it is inexpedient to risk a contest.'[2] 'Wexford, the peaceable, the cultivated,' wrote Cooke, 'has been and is the formidable spot. You will recollect, there were no returns, no delegates from Wexford. How artificial! You recollect in Reynolds' evidence that Lord Edward wanted to go to France, to hasten a landing from frigates at Wexford.[3] Be assured the battle of

[1] *Auckland Correspondence*, iv. 9, 10, 13.
[2] Castlereagh to Pelham.
[3] See Howell's *State Trials*, xxvii. 412.

New Ross was most formidable. . . . It was a grand attempt of the rebels, well planned and boldly attempted, and the success would have been ruinous. Johnston deserves greatly. He placed himself at the head of the Dublin County Regiment when the affair grew desperate, and by personal exertions succeeded.' 'The Dublin yeomanry are wonderful.'[1] A landing of the French or the slightest disaster, Camden again repeated, might make the situation most alarming. 'The most able generals, and a most numerous and well-disciplined army, can alone save Ireland from plunder, perhaps from separation from Great Britain.'[2]

The apprehensions expressed in these letters would probably have proved in no degree exaggerated if the French had landed, or if the rebellion had spread. But day after day the insurgents in Wexford looked in vain across the sea for the promised succour. The North, in which they had placed so much trust, was still passive, and although the banner of religion had been raised, and priests were in the forefront of the battle, the Catholic province of Connaught and the great Catholic counties of the South were perfectly tranquil. The insurrection was still confined to a few central counties, and outside Wexford it was nowhere formidable.

The tranquillity of the greater part of Ulster during the rebellion, the defection of the Presbyterians from the movement of which they were the main originators, and the great and enduring change which took place in their sentiments in the last years of the eighteenth century, are facts of the deepest importance in Irish history, and deserve very careful and detailed examination. It would be an error to attribute them to any single cause. They are due to a concurrence of several distinct influences, which can be clearly traced in the correspondence of the time. Much was due to the growth of the Orange movement, which had planted a new and a rival enthusiasm in the heart of the disaffected province, and immensely strengthened the forces opposed to the United Irishmen;[3] and much also to the success of long-

[1] Cooke to Pelham, June 3, 1798.

[2] Camden to Portland, June 10, 1798. See, too, a number of very interesting letters on the situation, in the *Auckland Correspondence*, iv. 3–10.

[3] 'Our Northern accounts are still very good; no stir there except on the right side. The people called Orangemen (whose principles have been totally misrepresented) keep the country in check, and will overpower the rebels, should they stir.' (Beresford to Auckland, June 1; *Auckland Correspondence*, iii. 442.)

continued military government. Martial law had prevailed in Ulster much longer than in the other provinces, and, as we have seen, an enormous proportion of the arms which had been so laboriously accumulated, had been discovered and surrendered. When the rebellion broke out, all the measures of precaution that were adopted in Dublin were taken in the towns of Ulster. The yeomanry were placed on permanent duty, and patrolled the streets by night. The inhabitants were forbidden to leave their houses between nine at night and five in the morning, and compelled to post up the names of those who were within them, which were to be called over whenever the military authorities desired. The arrival of every stranger was at once registered. A proclamation was issued, ordering all persons who were not expressly authorised to possess arms and ammunition, to bring them in within an assigned period, under pain of military execution, and promising at the same time that if they did so, they would be in no respect molested, and that no questions would be asked. At Belfast a court-martial sat daily in the market-place for the trial of all persons who were brought before it. One man, in whose house arms were found, was sentenced to eight hundred lashes, received two hundred, and then gave information which led to the flogging of a second culprit. About four hundred stand of arms were surrendered in a few days. One of the great anxieties of the authorities at Belfast was to discover six cannon, which had belonged to the Belfast volunteers, and had been carefully concealed. They were all found in the last week of May—two of them through information derived from an anonymous letter. Several persons were flogged for seditious offences. Many others who were suspected, but against whom there was no specific charge, were sent to the tender, and seven cars full of prisoners from Newry were lodged in Belfast gaol.[1]

Such measures, carried out severely through the province, made rebellion very difficult, and it was to them that Lord Clare appears to have mainly attributed the calm of Ulster. It is, however, very improbable that they would have been sufficient, if they had not been supported by a real change of sentiments. The sturdy, calculating, well-to-do Presbyterians

[1] *Historical Collections relating to Belfast*, pp. 479–483; McSkimmin's *History of Carrickfergus*, p. 97.

of the North might have risen to co-operate with a French army, or even to support a general, though unaided insurrection, if it had begun with a successful blow, and had been directed by leaders whom they knew. They were more and more disinclined to throw in their lot with disorderly Catholic mobs, assembled under nameless chiefs, who were plundering and often murdering Protestants, but who were in most cases scattered like chaff before small bodies of resolute yeomen. The rebellion in Leinster had assumed two forms, which were almost equally distasteful to Ulster. In some counties the rebels were helpless mobs, driven to arms by hope of plunder, or by fear of the Orangemen, or by exasperation at military severities, but destitute of all real enthusiasm and convictions, and perfectly impotent in the field. In Wexford they were very far from impotent, but there the struggle was assuming more and more the character of a religious war, and deriving its strength from religious fanaticism. The papers, day by day, told how the rebels were imprisoning, plundering, and murdering the Protestants; how the priests in their vestments were leading them to the fight, as to a holy war, which was to end in the extirpation of heresy; how Protestants were thronging the chapels to be baptised, as the sole means of saving their lives. In these accounts there was much that was exaggerated, and much that might be reasonably palliated or explained, but there was also much horrible truth, and the scenes that were enacted at Vinegar Hill and Scullabogue made a profound and indelible impression on the Northern mind. Men who had been the most ardent organisers of the United Irish movement, began to ask themselves whether this insurrection was not wholly different from what they had imagined and planned, and whether its success would not be the greatest of calamities. The tide of feeling suddenly changed, and even in Belfast itself, it soon ran visibly towards the Government.

The change of sentiment was greatly accelerated by other causes. The keynote of the conspiracy had been an alliance with France, for the establishment by French assistance of an Irish republic. But the utter failure of the French to profit by the golden opportunity of the Mutiny of the Nore; the mismanagement of the Bantry Bay expedition; the defeat of Camperdown, and the disappointment of several subsequent promises

of assistance, had shaken the confidence of the more intelligent Northerners in French assistance, while many things had lately occurred which tended to destroy their sympathy with French policy. The United Irish movement, as we have seen, was essentially and ardently republican; and although it assumed a different character when it passed into an ignorant and bigoted Catholic population, this change had not extended to the North. Republicanism from the time of the American Revolution had been deeply rooted among the Presbyterians of Ulster. They had readily accepted those doctrines about the rights of man, which Rousseau had made the dominant political enthusiasm of Europe, and it was as the dawn of an era of universal liberty that the French Revolution, in spite of all the horrors that accompanied it, had been welcomed with delight. The precedent by which their leaders justified their appeal for French assistance was that of 1688, when the heads of the English party opposed to James II. invited over the chief of the neighbouring republic with a small Dutch army, to assist them in establishing constitutional liberty.[1]

But although the French had given many assurances that they would leave the Irish free to settle their Constitution as they pleased, the evident tendency of the Revolution towards a military, conquering, and absorbing despotism had produced a profound effect. The anxiety of McNevin, when he went to France as the agent of the party, to limit the French contingent to ten thousand men, clearly displayed it.[2] Wolfe Tone mentions in his journal, the disgust and indignation with which he read the arrogant proclamation of Buonaparte to the republic of Genoa, in the summer of 1797, when that Republic passed wholly under French influence, and when its Constitution was remodelled under the direction of a French minister. Such a proclamation, Tone said to Hoche, if it had been published in Ireland, 'would have a most ruinous effect.' 'In Italy such dictation might pass, but never in Ireland, where we understand our rights too well to submit to it.'[3]

The destruction, or complete subjugation to French influence, of the Dutch Republic, of the Republic of Venice, and of

[1] McNevin's *Pieces of Irish History*, p. 204.

[2] *Secret Committee*, pp. 16, 17.

[3] Tone's *Memoirs*, ii. 416.

the Republic of Genoa, was soon followed by a series of atrocious outrages directed against the Swiss Confederation. The Revolution of the 18th fructidor, which drove Barthélemy and Carnot from power, and the treaty of Campo Formio, which freed France from all apprehension of the Emperor, were very unfavourable to the interests of Switzerland, and it became manifest that it was the intention of the French Government to force on a conflict. It is not here necessary to enumerate the many arrogant demands by which this policy was carried out. It is sufficient to say, that the presence in Switzerland of a certain number of discontented democrats, who played a part greatly resembling that of the United Irishmen in Ireland, powerfully assisted it. In a time of perfect peace a French army crossed the border; all resistance was crushed by force; Switzerland was given up to military violence, and to undisguised and systematic spoliation. Its ancient Constitution was destroyed, and a new Constitution, dictated from Paris, was imposed upon it.[1]

But there was another republic which was far dearer to the Ulster Presbyterians than Switzerland. No fact in the Irish history of the latter half of the eighteenth century is more conspicuous, than the close connection that subsisted between the North of Ireland and New England. The tree of liberty, according to the United Irish phraseology, had been sown in America, though it had been watered in France, and the great number of Irish Protestants who had emigrated to America, and the considerable part which they had borne in the American Revolution, gave a tinge of genuine affection to the political sympathy that united the two communities. But at the critical period at which we have now arrived, France and the United States were bitterly hostile, and apparently on the very brink of war.

The conflict originated with the commercial treaty which had been negotiated between England and the United States in 1794 and 1795. It had been fiercely resented in Paris, and the ill feeling it created had been rapidly envenomed by disputes about the rights of neutral vessels. I have related the controversy on

[1] See Mallet du Pan's *Essai Historique sur la Destruction de la Ligue et de la Liberté Helvétique*. There are some excellent chapters on this revolution in the *Annual Register* of 1798. See, too, Sybel.

this question, which had sharply divided England in 1778 and 1780 from France, Russia, and other continental Powers. The English maintained the right of seizing merchandise belonging to a hostile Power, even when it was carried in neutral vessels. The continental Powers maintained that free ships made free goods, that a neutral Power had the right of carrying on commerce with belligerent Powers, and conveying all goods belonging to them which were not, according to a strictly defined rule, contraband of war. The United States strongly maintained the continental doctrine, but they had never been able to make England acknowledge or observe it. France, on the other hand, was its principal supporter. She had specially introduced it into her treaty with America in 1778; and even since the war with England had begun, she had formally disclaimed all right of interfering with belligerent goods on American vessels. But a considerable carrying trade of English goods by American ships had grown up during the war, and France, finding herself seriously damaged by her adhesion to the continental doctrine, which her enemy refused to acknowledge, suddenly changed her policy; issued a decree ordering her privateers and ships of war to treat the vessels of neutral nations in the same manner in which those nations suffered themselves to be treated by the English; and formally notified this decree to the Americans. She at the same time contended that the United States, by entering into a commercial treaty with England, had forfeited the privileges of the treaty of 1778. The immediate consequence was, that numerous American vessels were captured by French or Spanish cruisers. From San Domingo especially, a swarm of French corsairs went forth to prey upon American commerce.

John Adams, who was then President, tried to arrive at some arrangement by negotiation, and three American envoys came to Paris in October 1797. They obtained interviews with Talleyrand, but their reception was exceedingly discouraging. The Directory refused to receive them, and they were told in language of extreme haughtiness that the French Government were exasperated by the policy of the United States, and still more by the language of its President, and would receive no American envoy without ample avowals, reparations, and explanations. Soon, however, it was intimated to them that one way was open to them by

which they could secure their neutrality, and save themselves from the threatened vengeance of France. The great want of the French Republic was money, and the envoys were informed that, if America desired to obtain any concession from France or any security for her commerce, she must purchase it by a large and immediate loan. Money, it was said, and much money, they must be prepared to furnish. It was added, that in addition to this loan, a sum of about 50,000*l.* should be given to the members of the Directory. Many other Powers, the envoys were told, had consented to buy peace from France, and America would find it equally her interest to do so. The force of France was irresistible.

The startled envoys replied, that such a demand lay utterly beyond their instructions, and had certainly never been contemplated by the Government which appointed them. They were prepared, however, to send one of their number across the Atlantic to ask for fresh instructions, if the French Government would, in the meantime, put a stop to the capture of American ships, and negotiate on the differences between the two countries. America, they said, had always been friendly to France, but the present state of things was even more ruinous than war. Property to the value of more than fifty millions of dollars had been already taken. Americans had been treated by France in every respect as enemies, and it was for them to ask for reparation. Not a dollar of American money, they were very certain, would go in a loan to the French, unless American property, unjustly confiscated, was previously restored, and further hostilities suspended. Unless these conditions were complied with, they would not even consult their Government concerning a loan. They were, however, perfectly prepared to negotiate a commercial treaty with France, as liberal as that which they had made with England.

The answer was a peremptory refusal. No confiscated property, they were told, should be returned, and no promise was given that the capture of American property should cease. Unless part, at least, of the money demanded was forthcoming, the envoys must leave Paris, nay more, the property of all Americans would probably be confiscated. The United States should take warning by the fate of Venice, for that fate might

soon be their own. A new decree was issued in January 1798, ordering that every ship of a neutral Power, which contained any goods of English fabric or produce, should be deemed a lawful prize, even though those goods belonged to neutrals, and that all ships which had so much as touched at an English port should be excluded from French harbours. Two of the American envoys were sent back to obtain fresh instructions. The third was, for the present, allowed to remain at Paris.

When these things became known in America, they excited a storm of indignation. Adams at once obtained power from the Congress to increase the army and navy, and to strengthen the defences. Washington was called from his retreat, and placed at the head of the army. As the capture of American vessels was still of almost daily occurrence, the Congress granted liberty to fit out privateers for the purpose of making reprisals. The envoy who had remained in Paris was immediately recalled, and the American Government appealed to the judgment of their own people and of the whole civilised world, by publishing all the despatches of their envoys.[1]

The declaration of war which seemed inevitable did not take place, though on both sides innumerable corsairs were fitted out. The ambition of France took other directions; the victories of Nelson soon made her very impotent upon the sea, and about two years later Buonaparte again reversed her policy, and made a new and friendly arrangement with the Americans. But the proof which was furnished by these despatches, of the spirit in which France acted towards the country which beyond all others seemed attached to her, made a profound impression throughout Europe. 'Not all the depredations of the French in Germany, the Netherlands, Holland, Switzerland, and Italy,' wrote a contemporary annalist, 'no, not their plunder of the papal territories, afforded to the minds of men so convincing a proof that the French Republic was governed, not more by a thirst of universal dominion than by a rage for plunder, as the attempt to subject the Americans to tribute.' In no other European country, however, did this episode

[1] The despatches will be found in full in the appendix of the *Annual Register* for 1798. See, too, Sybel, *Histoire de l'Europe pendant la Révolution* (French translation), v. 62–67, 150–152; and Adams's *Life*.

prove so important as in Ireland. In a most critical period of Irish history, it gave a complete check to the enthusiasm with which the French Revolution had hitherto been regarded by the Northern Presbyterians, and the sudden revulsion of feeling which it produced was one great cause of the tranquillity of Ulster.

A few extracts from contemporary letters will be sufficient to illustrate the progress of this change, and to justify my analysis of its causes. No one knew Ulster better than Dean Warburton, and on May 29 he wrote that all there was quiet, and that he believed it would continue so if matters went well in the rest of Ireland. 'The cunning and wary Northerners,' he continued, 'see that no revolution can be effected without a foreign aid (of which they now despair). The steadiness and loyalty of our militia have damped the hopes and expectations of the disaffected, and I think the Northern Dissenter will now quietly be a spectator of that destructive flame which he himself originally kindled up, and will take no active part in the present attempt.'[1]

Camden wrote that the report from Ulster was still favourable, but that he could only infer from it, 'that with their disaffection they [the Northerners] join much prudence; though there are many persons who conceive an alteration has taken place in the public mind there, from the American correspondence, and from the Catholics of the South making the present so much a religious question.'[2] 'The quiet of the North,' wrote Cooke, 'is to me unaccountable; but I feel that the popish tinge in the rebellion, and the treatment of France to Switzerland and America, has really done much, and in addition to the army, the force of Orange yeomanry is really formidable.'[3]

A report from Ulster in the Government papers, written apparently in the last days of May, declared that the accounts of Catholic atrocities in the rebellion were already having a great effect on the Presbyterians, disinclining them from joining with the Catholics, making them dread Catholic ascendency, and reviving the old antipathy of sects.[4]

[1] Dean Warburton to Cooke (Loughgilly), May 29, 1798.

[2] Camden to Portland, June 2, 1798.

[3] Cooke to Wickham, June 2, 1798.

[4] S.P.O. This paper is only signed by initials. It is among those of the first days of June. So Beresford writing the last day of May, after describing the atrocities in Wexford, says: 'Bad and shocking as this is, it

'The Northerners,' wrote Henry Alexander, ten days later, 'do not like the papists. They feel the injuries to America. They have not the plenty of provisions the Wexfordians had. They possess the escheated counties; and their bleachers, though they would huckster with any man who would promise to govern them cheapest, will not like the destruction of their greens.'[1]

The letters of Bishop Percy throw much interesting light on this subject. He was in Dublin while the rebellion was at its height, but his diocese of Dromore was in the heart of the disaffected part of Ulster, and in addition to the intelligence he received from members of the Government at Dublin, he had his own correspondents in Ulster. 'The North,' he wrote, 'is perfectly safe; the Protestants being here in some places murdered by the Irish papists, has turned all the Dissenters against them.' His vicar-general wrote to him that his diocese was absolutely tranquil, that the arms were being generally surrendered; that a judicious combination of severity and indulgence was breaking up the conspiracy, and that the conspirators had been profoundly disgusted by the disappearance of some of their treasurers. 'Another cause,' wrote the vicar-general, 'which has alienated our Northern Irish republicans from France, is the vile treatment shown to Switzerland and America; to the latter of whom they were exceedingly devoted, especially at Belfast, where they are now signing resolutions of abhorrence of French tyranny.'[2]

'A wonderful change,' wrote the Bishop, a few days later, 'has taken place among republicans in the North, especially in and near Belfast. They now abhor the French as much as they formerly were partial to them, and are grown quite loyal. Last Monday the King's birthday was celebrated at Belfast, with as much public rejoicing as it ever was at St. James's. Not only the whole town was illuminated, but bonfires were lighted on all the adjoining hills. This could not be counterfeit. . . . It is owing to the scurvy treatment which the French have shown

has its horrid use; for now there is a flying off of many Protestant men who were united, and the North consider it as a religious war, and, by many letters this day, have resolved to be loyal.' (*Auckland Correspondence*, iii. 439.)

[1] Henry Alexander to Pelham, June 10, 1798. (*Pelham MSS.*)

[2] Bishop Percy to his wife, May 28, 29, 1798. (British Museum.)

to the United States of America, so beloved and admired by our Northern Republicans. You know how enthusiastically fond they were of the Americans, and now that the latter must fly to Great Britain for protection, their Irish friends are become the warm adherents of Great Britain. They have sent the most loyal address to Government, with offers of any service that shall be accepted. . . . The murder of the Protestants in the South will prevent them ever joining again with them, much less in the present rebellion.'[1]

At Omagh alone, not less than six thousand Presbyterians offered their services without expense to the Government, and their example was followed in other places. The ranks of the Orangemen at the same time rapidly filled, and great multitudes of them offered to march to any part of the kingdom to suppress rebellion.[2] The attempts by intimidation or persuasion to prevent the enrolment of a yeomanry force, had either ceased or been completely defeated. According to Musgrave, the four counties of Fermanagh, Tyrone, Derry, and Armagh together furnished no less than fourteen thousand yeomen, and he adds that three-fourths of them were Presbyterians; that most of them were Orangemen, and that, in spite of the recent disaffection of the Presbyterian body, he did not know a single case of a Presbyterian yeoman having betrayed his oath of allegiance.[3]

It could hardly, however, have been expected that a conspiracy so widespread as that in Ulster should produce no effect. Alarming intelligence now came to Dublin, that on June 7 a rebellion had broken out in the North. A few months before, such intelligence would have portended a struggle of the most formidable dimensions, but it soon appeared that the rebellion was practically confined to the two counties of Antrim and Down, and it was suppressed in a few days. In the county

[1] Bishop Percy to his wife, June 8, 1798. On the illuminations at Belfast, see *Saunders's Newsletter*, June 8. Another remarkable letter on the state of Ulster is from Lord William Bentinck, who had resided in Armagh for two years. 'The Dissenters,' he wrote, 'whom I knew to be the most disaffected a year and a half ago, are now ready to support the existing Government, and I believe with sincerity. I do not fancy that their opinions are much changed or their natural inclination to republicanism extinguished, but their affection for their properties, which they conceive in danger from what they happily term a popish rebellion, has been the cause of their present inaction. They prefer a Protestant to a popish Establishment.' (June 21, 1798, I.S.P.O.)

[2] *Saunders's Newsletter*, June 14, 1798.

[3] Musgrave, p. 194.

of Antrim the only important operation was an attack on June 7, on the town of Antrim, by a body of rebels whose strength is very variously estimated, but probably consisted of from 3,000 to 4,000 men. Their leader was a young Belfast cotton manufacturer, named Henry Joy McCracken, one of the original founders of the United Irish Society, and one of the very few of those founders who ever appeared in the field. He was a man of singularly amiable private character, and is said to have formerly taken a part in establishing the first Sunday-school at Belfast.[1] A brother of William Orr was conspicuous among the rebel officers.

As I have already stated, the Government had an informer in the Provincial Committee of Ulster, who had long been giving information about the Ulster rebels, and who furnished reports which were regularly transmitted to London, and which established the guilt of every leader of consequence in the province.[2] Through his information they were fully prepared for the attack, and Antrim was defended by Colonel Lumley with two or three troops of dragoons, two cannon, and a considerable body of yeomanry. The rebels had a cannon,[3] but it was disabled at the second shot. They were chiefly armed with pikes, but some hundreds of them had muskets. There was a sharp fight, lasting for between two and three hours, in the streets of Antrim and in the adjoining demesne of Lord Massareene, and the rebels showed very considerable courage. They endured without flinching several

[1] See Harwood, p. 203.

[2] Nicholas Magean. Castlereagh says: 'It was upon his information that General Nugent was enabled so to dispose his force—at that time very much weakened by detaching to the South—as to attack the rebels in those points of assembly, and to gain those decisive advantages over them, before their strength was collected, which have completely repressed the insurrection in the North, at least for the present.' (Castlereagh to Wickham, private, June 22, 1798.) Castlereagh mentions that the informer was in custody at his own desire, but refused to give evidence. This informer's name is also spelt Maguan, Magein, Magin, and Maginn. Pollock, in a letter dated July 13, 1798, mentions that Wickham said that after the trials, 'a letter should be written by the Lord Lieutenant to the Treasury in England, stating the magnitude and importance of Magin's services, that by his means the rebels in Ulster were prevented taking the field.' (I.S P.O. Compare the *Report of the Secret Committee* of 1798, app. xiv; and Madden's *United Irishmen*, i. 458, 459; iv. 54.) There is reason to believe that he made a stipulation, that no man should lose his life on his evidence.

[3] According to another account, two, but only one appears to have been brought into action.

discharges of grape shot; repulsed with heavy loss a charge of cavalry; killed or wounded about fifty soldiers, and forced back the troops into Lord Massareene's grounds. Colonel Lumley and three or four other officers were wounded. Two officers were killed, and Lord O'Neil fell, pierced with a pike, and died in a few days. The rebels, however, were at last driven back, and on the arrival of some additional troops from Belfast and from the camp at Blaris, they fled precipitately, leaving from 200 to 400 men on the field.[1]

The little town of Larne had been attacked early on the same morning by some rebels from Ballymena, but a small body of Tay Fencibles, aided by a few loyal inhabitants, easily drove them back. Randalstown and Ballymena were the same day occupied by rebels with little resistance, and some yeomen were taken prisoners, but the defeat of the 7th had already broken the rebellion in Antrim. The rebels found that the country was not rising to support them, and that there was absolutely no chance of success. Disputes and jealousies are said to have arisen in their ranks between the Protestants and the Catholics. Multitudes deserted, and a profound discouragement prevailed. Colonel Clavering issued a proclamation ordering an immediate surrender of arms and prisoners, and as it was not complied with, he set fire to Randalstown, with the exception of the places of worship and a few houses belonging to known loyalists. Two yeomanry officers were immediately after released, and the inhabitants of Ballymena sent to Clavering, offering to surrender their arms and prisoners, if their town was not burnt.[2] The small remnant of the rebel force returned, on the 11th, to Dunagore Hill. Clavering, contrary to the wishes of some hot loyalists, offered a pardon to all except the leaders, if they surrendered their arms and returned to their allegiance, and this offer led to their almost complete dispersion. McCracken with a very few followers attempted to escape, but he was soon arrested, and tried and executed at Belfast. Another Antrim leader, named James Dickey, was not long after hanged in the same town, and he is stated by Musgrave to have declared

[1] See the accounts (differing in many details) in Musgrave, Gordon, McSkimmin, in the official bulletin (*Saunders's Newsletter*, June 11), and in Teeling's *Personal Narrative*.

[2] General Nugent to General Lake, June 18, 1798.

before his execution, that the eyes of the Presbyterians had been opened too late; that they at last understood from the massacres in Leinster, that if they had succeeded in overturning the Constitution, they would then have had to contend with the papists.[1]

The insurrection in the county of Down was as brief, and hardly more important. It was intended to have broken out on the same day as that in the county of Antrim, and in that case it might have been very serious, but the precipitation of the Antrim rebels prevented this, and the battle at Antrim on the 7th put an end to all hopes of co-operation. On June 9, however, a large body of rebels assembled in the barony of Ards, and they succeeded in forming an ambuscade, and surprising, near Saintfield, Colonel Stapleton, who with some York Fencibles and yeomanry cavalry had hastened to the scene. The rebels were at first completely successful, and they drove the cavalry back in confusion with a loss of about sixty men, including three officers and also the Rector of Portaferry, who had volunteered to serve. The infantry soon rallied, repulsed their assailants, and became masters of the field, but the affair was at best indecisive, for the troops were ordered to retire to Belfast, no prisoners were taken, and the rebels, having suffered but little, occupied Saintfield. Next day most of the surrounding country was in arms. Newtown Ards was at first successfully defended, but then evacuated and occupied without resistance. On the 11th, Portaferry was attacked, but after a most gallant defence by the local yeomanry, aided by the guns of a revenue cutter which was lying in the river, the assailants were driven back with much loss. The rebels then in a great body, numbering, it is said, at one time not less than 7,000 men, encamped in a strong position behind Ballinahinch, on the property of Lord Moira. They selected as their leader Henry Monroe, a linendraper of Lisburn, who had been formerly an

[1] Musgrave, p. 184. Musgrave must always be read with suspicion when he treats of any question relating to Catholics; but I see no improbability in this statement, and it is corroborated by the 'Field Officer' quoted by Maxwell, who says: 'The accounts of the bloody goings-on in Wexford had their full share in bringing the Northerners to their senses, as many of them made no scruple of declaring at the place of execution.' (Maxwell's *History of the Rebellion*, p. 217.)

active volunteer, and who had some slight military knowledge and capacity.

General Nugent marched hastily to encounter them with a force of 1,500 or 1,600 men, partly yeomanry and partly regular troops, and accompanied by eight cannon. As they proceeded through the rebel country, their path was marked by innumerable blazing cottages, set fire to on their march.[1] On the evening of the 12th they succeeded, by a heavy cannonade, in driving the rebels from the strong post on Windmill Hill, and a rebel colonel, who defended it to the last, was taken there, and immediately hanged. The rebels had also taken some prisoners, but they did them no harm, and General Nugent relates that his troops at this time surrounded a wood in which the rebels had gathered, rescued the yeomanry prisoners, and killed nearly all the defenders. In the middle of the night Ballinahinch was occupied by troops, Monroe concentrating his forces on a neighbouring height. There was much division in the rebel camp. One party counselled a night attack, and there were reports that the troops were engaged in pillage or incapacitated by intoxication, but Monroe determined to await the daybreak. It has been said that dissension broke out between the Catholics and the Protestants, and it is at least certain that some hundreds of rebels, in the night, fell away in a body.[2] Perhaps the fact that many of them were half armed, hopeless of success, and driven unwillingly into the rebellion, furnishes the best explanation. General Nugent estimated the rebel force on the evening of the 12th at near 5,000 men, but believed that as many persons who had been pressed into the service, and who were totally unarmed, had escaped during the night, there were not nearly so many on the morning of the 13th.[3]

[1] Teeling, p. 250.

[2] Musgrave declares that the rebels in the battle of Ballinahinch were 'Protestant Dissenters, with few if any Roman Catholics, as 2,000 of them deserted the night before the battle, and inflamed the Presbyterians very much against them.' (P. 557.) Teeling, who gives the best Catholic account of the battle, says that, in the night before, 'a division of nearly 700 men, and more generally armed with muskets than the rest, marched off in one body with their leader;' but he attributes this to their discontent at Monroe's refusal to make a midnight attack, and he makes no mention of any religious differences. (*Personal Narrative*, pp. 255, 256.) The 'Field Officer' whose narrative is quoted by Maxwell, believed that there was both military dissension and religious jealousy. (*History of the Rebellion*, p. 218.)

[3] Printed bulletin.

Shortly before daybreak on that morning, Monroe attacked the troops in Ballinahinch. The rebels, according to the confession of their enemies, showed signal courage, rushing to the very muzzles of the cannon, where many of them were blown to pieces, and where bodies were found as black as coal from the discharge. Once or twice their impetuosity seemed to carry all before it; but at last, superior discipline and greatly superior arms asserted their inevitable ascendency, and the rebels were totally defeated and dispersed with the loss of 400 or 500 men. The loss on the loyalist side was only twenty-nine. Some green flags and six small unmounted cannon were among the spoil. No prisoners were made during the fight, for the troops gave no quarter, but nine or ten fugitives were captured almost immediately after, and at once hanged. The town of Ballinahinch was burnt almost to the ground. One of the correspondents of Bishop Percy, who visited it shortly after the battle, says that its smoke rose to heaven like that of Sodom and Gomorrah, and that not more than three houses in it were unscathed.[1]

'The conduct of the troops,' writes Lord Castlereagh, describing this battle to Pelham, 'was everything one could wish *in point of spirit*. Their discipline not much improved by free quarters. Nugent writes in the highest praise of the Northern yeomanry; he describes them for this particular service as equal to the best troops.'[2] 'The rebels,' he wrote in another letter, 'fought at Ballinahinch, as at Wexford, with determined bravery, but without the fanaticism of the Southerners. They made the attack, and used some wretched ship guns, mounted on cars, with considerable address. . . . Upon the whole, the North is divided in sentiment. We have numerous adherents, and I am inclined to hope that the effort there will prove rather a diversion than the main attack.'[3] It is a curious fact, that in this

[1] See the report of General Nugent, June 13; and some interesting letters, describing the battle, sent by Bishop Percy to his wife. See, too, the accounts in Teeling's *Personal Narrative*, in Maxwell and in Musgrave. The fact that the property of Lord Moira was the centre of the rebellion in Ulster, was not forgotten by the opponents of that nobleman:

'A certain great statesman, whom all of us know,
In a certain assembly no long while ago,
Declared from this maxim he never would flinch—
That no town was so loyal as Ballinahinch,' &c.

(*Beauties of the Anti-Jacobin*, pp. 289, 290.)

[2] Castlereagh to Pelham, June 16, 1798. (*Pelham MSS.*)

[3] Castlereagh to Elliot, June 16, 1798. (Ibid.)

battle the overwhelming majority of the rebels were Protestants, while the Monaghan Militia, an almost exclusively Catholic regiment, formed a large portion of the loyalist force.

The short Protestant rebellion in Ulster was almost wholly untarnished by the acts of cruelty and murder that were so frequent in the South,[1] but the repression was not less savage and brutal.' After the decisive battle of Ballinahinch, however, General Nugent followed the example of Colonel Clavering in Antrim, and offered pardon and protection to all rebels, except the leaders, who would lay down their arms and return to their allegiance. Should that submission not be made, the proclamation continued, 'Major-General Nugent will proceed to set fire to, and totally destroy, the towns of Killinchy, Killileagh, Ballinahinch, Saintfield, and every cottage and farmhouse in the vicinity of those places, carry off the stock and cattle, and put every one to the sword who may be found in arms.' At Belfast, Colonel Durham warned the inhabitants, that if any traitor was found concealed, with the knowledge or connivance of the owner, in any house in that town or neighbourhood, 'such person's house, so offending, shall be burnt, and the owner thereof hanged.'[2]

No further troubles, however, appeared in Ulster, and a few executions closed this page of the rebellion. Some slight movements which had arisen in the county of Derry, had been easily suppressed by General Knox, and in the other counties the loyal party seemed now completely to predominate. Monroe tried to escape, but was soon arrested, and hanged at Lisburn before his own house, and, it is said, before the eyes of his

[1] Bishop Percy, afterwards speaking of the barbarities in other parts of Ireland, adds: 'Thank God, our rebels in this country, being chiefly Protestant Dissenters, were of very different complexion, and were guilty of no wanton cruelties. I have accounts on all hands that they treated our clergy, and others who fell into their hands, with great humanity, and according to the usual laws of war.' (Oct. 27.) This was all the more remarkable if, as Bishop Percy said in other letters, the rebels in the North were only miscreants of the lowest kind. 'All the more rational republicans,' he said, 'are disgusted with France for their ill treatment of America,' and 'are separating from the popish Defenders, who are only bent on mischief.' (June 11, 13, 1798.) Musgrave and Gordon, however, state that a party from Saintfield attacked the house of a farmer named McKee (who had prosecuted some United Irishmen), and that, meeting a fierce resistance, they set fire to the house, and all within perished in the flames. (Musgrave, p. 555; Gordon, p. 160.)

[2] Maxwell, pp. 217, 218.

mother and his wife. He died like a true Christian and a brave man, and impressed all who witnessed his end, with his courage and his manifest sincerity. His head, according to the barbarous fashion of the time, was severed from his body, and fixed on a spike in the market-place of Lisburn. The green and white plume which he wore on his helmet in the battle of Ballinahinch, was afterwards given to Bishop Percy.[1]

We must now return to the theatre of war in Wexford, and follow the fate of the rebel army which had been defeated, but not dissolved or dispersed, in the great battle of New Ross, on June 5. On that evening, the rebels, with a long train of cars bearing their wounded and dead, retreated to their old camp on Carrickbyrne Hill, and it was there that Bagenal Harvey for the first time learnt the horrible tragedy that had taken place at Scullabogue. It is related that the resolution which had supported him through the battle and the defeat and the flight, then gave way, and he wrung his hands in agony, bitterly deploring that he had any part in a cause which bore such fruit. He opened a subscription for burying the remains of the murdered prisoners, gave prompt orders to arrest and punish the murderers, and at once wrote a proclamation, which was countersigned by his adjutant-general Breen, and was printed, and widely distributed among all the rebel forces through the county. It laid down stringent rules of discipline under pain of death, and appointed courts-martial to enforce them. 'Any person or persons,' it concluded, 'who shall take upon them to kill or murder any person or persons, burn any house, or commit any plunder, without special written orders from the commander-in-chief, shall suffer death.'[2]

The unfortunate commander was very impotent in the midst of the fierce mob of fanatics who swept him along. A touching letter, which has been preserved, written about this time to an old friend, who asked him to protect some property, paints

[1] Bishop Percy to his wife, Oct. 27, 1798. The Bishop says that the painter Robinson painted a picture of the battle of Ballinahinch, which contained many portraits of those who were engaged in it. It was raffled for, and won by Lord Hertford. Of the death of Monroe, we have three remarkable accounts: Maxwell, pp. 215, 216; Teeling, p. 260; Musgrave, p. 557. His name—like nearly every name in this part of my history—is spelt by contemporaries in several different ways.

[2] Taylor, pp. 70–73; Hay, pp. 159–161; Cloney, pp. 44. 45.

vividly both his character and his situation.[1] His short command was, however, now over. On the 7th the rebels moved their camp to the hill of Slyeeve-Keelter, which rises about five miles from Ross, on the river formed by the united streams of the Nore and Barrow. They there deposed Bagenal Harvey from the command, and bestowed it on a priest named Philip Roche, who had taken a prominent part in the defeat of Colonel Walpole on June 4. The influence which this victory had given him, his priestly character, his gigantic stature and strength, his loud voice and his boisterous manners, made him much more fitted to command the rebel army, than the feeble and scrupulous Protestant gentleman he superseded, and there is some reason to believe that he had more natural talent for military matters.[2]

[1] 'Dear Sir,—I received your letter, but what to do for you I know not. I, from my heart, wish to protect all property. I can scarcely protect myself, and indeed my situation is much to be pitied, and distressing to myself. I took my present situation in hopes of doing good, and preventing mischief. My trust is in Providence. I acted always an honest, disinterested part, and had the advice I gave some time since been taken, the present mischief could never have arisen. If I can retire to a private station again, I will, immediately. Mr. Tottenham's refusing to speak to the gentleman I sent into Ross, who was madly shot by the soldiers, was very unfortunate. It has set the people mad with rage, and there is no restraining them. The person I sent in, had private instructions to propose a reconciliation, but God knows where this business will end; but, end how it may, the good men of both parties will be inevitably ruined.' (Taylor, p. 76.)

[2] See Gordon, p. 123. I must acknowledge myself quite unable to draw the character of this priest. Harwood sums up very well the Catholic version, when he describes him as 'a man abundantly gifted by nature with all the qualities that the post required: of intrepid personal courage, indomitable firmness, a quick and true military eye, immense physical strength and power of enduring privation and fatigue, great tact for managing the rude masses he had to rule, and a generous, humane heart with it all.' (*History of the Rebellion*, p. 185.) Maxwell gives the loyalist version: 'Like Murphy of Boulavogue, Roche was a man of ferocious character and vulgar habits; but, although drunken and illiterate, his huge stature and rough manners gave him a perfect ascendency over the savage mobs which, in rebel parlance, constituted an army. . . . He evinced neither talent nor activity. His chief exploit was an attack upon a gentleman's house, in which he was disgracefully repulsed; while in a new camp he formed within a mile of Ross, the time was passed in drunken revelry, diversified occasionally with a sermon from Father Philip, or the slaughter of some helpless wretch, accused of being an enemy to the people.' (Ibid. pp. 128, 129.) Musgrave describes him as 'an inhuman savage,' but Gordon says that, although 'Philip Roach was in appearance fierce and sanguinary,' several persons who were in danger of being murdered on Vinegar Hill, owed their lives 'to his boisterous interference.' (P. 140.) He admits that he was often intoxicated, but adds, 'for a charge of cruelty against him, I can find no foundation. On the contrary, I have heard many instances of his active humanity.' (Appendix, p. 84.) Miles Byrne describes him as 'a clergyman of the most elegant manners, a fine person, tall and handsome, humane and brave beyond description.' (*Memoirs*, i. 86.)

Harvey went back to Wexford, where he assisted Keugh in governing and defending the town, and restraining the populace from outrage. The priests did all they could to sustain the courage of the people, by appeals to their fanaticism and credulity. Some are said to have declared that they were invulnerable, that they could catch the bullets in their hands, that it was only want of faith that caused Catholic rebels to fall by Protestant bullets; and protections and charms, signed and, it is alleged, sold by the new commander, were hung round the necks of the rebel soldiers, to guarantee them from any injury in battle.[1] The weather had been unusually fine, which greatly lightened the hardships of those who were compelled to sleep unsheltered in the open air, and this was constantly appealed to as a clear proof that the benediction of Heaven rested on their cause.

This body of rebels made attempts, which were not wholly unsuccessful, to intercept the navigation of the river of Ross. They captured some small boats; they attacked a gunboat, and killed some of her sailors, but failed to take her, and they succeeded in intercepting a mail, which furnished valuable information about the proceedings and preparations of the Government. On the 10th they moved their camp to Lacken Hill, a mile from Ross, where they remained for some days unmolested and almost inactive. They sent, however, detachments to scour the country for arms and provisions, and gave orders that all males should join their camp. One small party penetrated to the little town of Borris in Carlow, which they partly burnt, but the neighbouring country house of Mr. Kavanagh had been turned into a fortress, and was strongly garrisoned by yeomen, and when the rebels attacked it, they were beaten back with heavy loss. Ten of their number, it is said, were left dead, and as many wounded, while only one of the garrison fell.[2] It should be remembered to the credit of Father Roche, that the camp at Lacken Hill, where he held the undivided command, appears to have been absolutely unstained by the murders which had been so numerous at Vinegar Hill.[3]

[1] Taylor and Musgrave have printed some curious 'protections,' which were taken from the necks of captured or slain rebels.

[2] Gordon, p. 124. Cloney, who was present at the attack, gives an interesting account of it. (*Personal Narrative*, pp. 48–51.)

[3] Gordon, Appendix, p. 85.

The reader may remember that another great body of rebels had encamped, after the defeat of Colonel Walpole, in the neighbourhood of Gorey. If they had pressed on at once, after the victory of the 4th, upon Arklow, it must have fallen without resistance, and the road to Dublin would then have been open to them. They wasted, however, precious days, feasting upon their spoil, trying prisoners who were accused of being Orangemen, plundering houses, and burning the town of Carnew; and in the meantime the little garrison, which had at first evacuated Arklow in terror, had returned, and had been powerfully reinforced. It now amounted to 1,500 or 1,600 effective men, chiefly militia and yeomen, but with some artillery. The whole was placed under the skilful direction of General Needham, and every precaution was taken to create or strengthen defences. The rebels at last saw that a great effort must be made to capture the town; and reinforcements having been obtained from Vinegar Hill and from other quarters, they marched from Gorey on the 9th, in a great host which was estimated at 25,000, 30,000, or even 34,000 men, but which, in the opinion of General Needham, did not exceed 19,000. According to the lowest estimate, their numbers appeared overwhelming, but their leaders alone were mounted: they were for the most part wretchedly armed, as scarcely any blacksmith or gunsmith could be found to repair their pikes or guns; their attack was anticipated, and they began it fatigued with a long day's march.

It commenced about four in the afternoon. The rebels advanced from the Coolgreny road and along the sandhills on the shore in two great solid columns, the intervening space being filled with a wild, disorderly crowd, armed with pikes and guns, and wearing green cockades, and green ribbons round their hats. Needham drew out his force in a strong position protected by ditches in front of the barracks. Five cannon supported him, and a heavy fire of grape shot poured continuously into the dense columns of the rebels. These set fire to the cabins that form the suburbs of Arklow, and advanced under shelter of the smoke, and their gunsmen availed themselves of the cover of fences, hedges, and ditches to gall the enemy. It was observed, however, that they usually overloaded

their muskets, and fired so high that they did little damage, and although they had three, or, according to another account, four cannon, they had hardly any one capable of managing them. Their shot for the most part plunged harmlessly into the ground, or flew high above the enemy, and some of the rebels wished their captains to give them the canister shot as missiles, declaring that with them they would dash out the brains of the troops. An artillery sergeant, who had been taken prisoner, was compelled to serve at the guns, and it is said that he purposely pointed them so high that they did no damage to the troops.[1]

The brunt of the battle was chiefly borne by the Durham Fencibles, an admirably appointed regiment of 360 men, which had only arrived at Arklow that morning. The yeomanry cavalry also more than once charged gallantly, and Captain Thomas Knox Grogan, a brother of the old man who was with the rebels at Wexford, was killed at the head of the Castletown troop. For some time the situation was very critical; at one moment it seemed almost hopeless, and Needham is said to have spoken of retreat, but to have been dissuaded by Colonel Skerrett, who was second in command. It is impossible, indeed, to speak too highly of the endurance and courage of the thin line of defenders who, during three long hours, confronted and baffled a host ten times as numerous as themselves, and it was all the more admirable, as the rebels on their side showed no mean courage. 'Their perseverance,' wrote Needham to General Lake, 'was surprising, and their efforts to possess themselves of the guns on my right were most daring, advancing even to the muzzles, where they fell in great numbers.' 'A heavy fire of grape did as much execution as, from the nature of the ground and the strong fences of which they had possessed themselves, could have been expected. This continued incessantly from 6 o'clock until 8.30, when the enemy desisted from his attack and fled in disorder.' At this time their ammunition was almost exhausted. The shades of night were drawing in, and their favourite commander, Father Michael Murphy, had fallen. He led his men into battle, waving above his head a green flag,

[1] This statement, which has been made by Gordon and also by the rebel writers, is confirmed by the report of Captain Moore, in the Record Office.

emblazoned with a great white cross, and with the inscription 'Death or liberty,' and he was torn to pieces by canister shot within a few yards of the muzzle of a cannon which he was trying to take. He was one of those whom the rebels believed to be invulnerable, and his death cast a sudden chill over their courage. It was too late for pursuit, and the rebels retired unmolested to Gorey, but their loss had been very great. 'Their bodies,' wrote General Needham, 'have been found in every direction scattered all over the country. The cabins were everywhere filled with them, and many cars loaded with them were carried off after the action. Numbers were also thrown by the enemy into the flames at the lower end of the town. On the whole, I am sure the number of killed must have exceeded a thousand.' On the loyalist side the loss was quite inconsiderable.[1]

The battle of Arklow was the last in which the rebels had any real chance of success, and from this time the rebellion rapidly declined. For some days, however, the alarms of the Government were undiminished. The multitude who had appeared in arms in the county of Wexford, the fanatical courage they displayed, the revolt which had begun in the North, and the complete uncertainty about how far that revolt might extend, or how soon the French might arrive, filled them with an anxiety which appears in all their most confidential letters. Within a few days great numbers of the principal persons in Ireland, including nearly all the bishops, sent their wives and children to England, and on the 10th Lady Camden and her family crossed the Channel. This last fact was intended to be a profound secret, but it was known to many, and in spite

[1] See the report of General Needham to General Lake, June 10, 11, 1798; and also an interesting account of the battle by Captain Moore, in the Record Office. Some particulars, derived from those who were present, are also given in a letter from H. Alexander to Pelham, June 10. (*Pelham MSS.*) See, too, the accounts in Taylor, Musgrave, and Gordon, and in the *Memoirs* of Miles Byrne, who was present in the battle. Byrne maintains that the retreat was wholly unnecessary, and that Arklow might with little difficulty have still been taken. Beresford wrote to Auckland a description of this battle. He says: 'The Ancient Britons who made their escape, assured Needham that the priests who attend the army say mass almost every hour, and work up the people's mind to enthusiasm. There are two or three killed in every battle.' (*Auckland Correspondence*, iv. 15.) Father Michael Murphy's body appears to have been horribly mutilated after death by some Ancient Britons. (See Gordon, pp. 212, 213.)

of the most peremptory injunctions, it was speedily disclosed.[1] Pelham was still in England, and on the 11th, Camden wrote to him to press upon the English Ministers, both urgently and officially, the extreme gravity of the situation. 'You may be assured,' he wrote, 'that the complexion this rebellion wears is the most serious it is possible to conceive. Unless Great Britain pours an immense force into Ireland, the country is lost; unless she sends her most able generals, those troops may be sacrificed. The organisation of this treason is universal, and the formidable numbers in which the rebels assemble, oblige all those who have not the good fortune to escape, to join them. The rebels have possessed themselves of Wexford, and of that whole country. They have possessed themselves of Newtown Ards, and the whole neck of land on that side of the Lough of Strangford is evacuated. The force from Wexford is so great, that it is not thought proper to advance against them. . . . There is no doubt an intention to attempt a rising within the city. . . . The country is lost unless a very large reinforcement of troops is landed.' This opinion 'is universal.'[2]

To Portland he wrote, expressing his astonishment that the English Government should treat this rebellion as one of trivial importance, and that, in spite of his earnest representations, and although the struggle had now lasted for between two and three weeks, 'not a single man had been landed in Ireland.' Mr. Elliot, he said, who had been sent over to lay the situation before the Government, 'will communicate to you the religious frenzy which agitates the rebels in Wexford, that they are headed by their priests, that they halt every half-mile to pray, that the deluded multitude are taught to consider themselves as fighting for their religion, that their enthusiasm is most alarming. He will inform your Grace how violently agitated the Protestant feeling in Ireland is at this moment, and with how rapid strides

[1] Bishop Percy mentions that, on the night of Lady Camden's departure, he was walking with the Bishop of Clogher round Merrion Square, when it was almost dark. When they came opposite Lady Frances Beresford's house, they saw that lady standing on her balcony, and could not help hearing what a lady in the street below was calling to her at the full pitch of her voice. It was the whole story of the departure of Lady Camden. The two bishops, without revealing themselves, contrived to see the face of the indiscreet informant, and found that she was Lady Castlereagh. (Bishop Percy to his wife, June 11, 1798.)

[2] Camden to Pelham, June 11, 1798. (*Pelham MSS.*)

the war is becoming one of the most cruel and bloody that ever disgraced or was imposed on a country. He will explain to your Grace how impolitic and unwise it would be to refuse the offers of Protestants to enter into yeomanry or other corps, and yet how dangerous even, any encouragement to the Orange spirit is, whilst our army is composed of Catholics, as the militia almost generally is.'[1]

Lord Castlereagh wrote several letters in the same sense. He had not, he said, 'a conception the insurgents would remain together and act in such numbers,' and although the narrow limitation of the Ulster rebellion seemed encouraging, he had secret information that it had been arranged, 'that the rising in Down and Antrim should precede that of the other counties where the disaffection is less general.' In the meantime, the fact that no reinforcements had yet arrived from England afforded 'a moral which the disaffected do not fail to reason from, that with French assistance, the people could have carried the country before a regiment from the other side found its way to our assistance.' This circumstance, he observed, would hereafter have its weight both in France and Ireland. 'It is of importance that the authority of England should decide this contest, as well with a view to British influence in Ireland, as to make it unnecessary for the Government to lend itself too much to a party in this country, highly exasperated by the religious persecution to which the Protestants in Wexford have been exposed.' He sent over to England a specimen of the protections which had been issued by the rebels, attesting the conversion to Catholicism of the person who bore it, and securing him in consequence from molestation, and he pointed out as clearly as Camden, that, in Wexford at least, the United Irish movement had completely lost its original character, and had transformed itself into a religious war. 'The priests lead the rebels to battle; on their march they kneel down and pray, and show the most desperate resolution in their attack. . . . They put such Protestants, as are reported to be Orangemen, to death,

[1] Camden to Portland, June 11, 1798 (most secret). On June 9, Lees wrote to Auckland: 'We have not yet a single soldier from your side on this.' 'Most strange,' wrote Beresford on the 14th, 'not a man yet arrived in the South or at Dublin. . . . I hear some are at Carrickfergus.' (*Auckland Correspondence*, iv. 11, 19.) These passages, and the letters in the text, have an important bearing on the question how far the rebellion was put down by Irish, and how far by English, efforts.

saving others upon condition of their embracing the Catholic faith. It is a Jacobinical conspiracy throughout the kingdom, pursuing its object chiefly with popish instruments.'[1]

Horrible indeed as were the cruelties that disgraced both sides, they were less deplorable, because less permanent, than the moral effects that were their consequence. Day by day, almost hour by hour, the work of conciliation, which had been carried on in Ireland during the last half-century, was being undone, and in an age when religious animosities were generally fading throughout Europe, they acquired in Ireland a tenfold virulence. No one saw this more clearly than McNally, whose letters to the Government at this time are very instructive, and in some respects very creditable both to his head and to his heart. He strongly urged the falsehood and the folly of describing the rebellion as a popish plot. It was at its outset more Presbyterian than popish, and more deistical than either, and its leaders were as far as possible from aiming at any religious ascendency or desiring any religious persecution. It was quite true, as he had told the Government nearly three years before, 'that the priests and country schoolmasters were the principal agitators of French politics, and that among the priests, those expelled from France, as well as the fugitive students from that country, were the most active,' but it was also true 'that this class of demagogues and pedagogues, far from being superstitious Catholics, defied not only the devil, but the Pope and all his works, and were in their private conversation pure deists. Among the Roman Catholics of property and education,' he continued, 'I find strong principles, not only of aristocracy, but monarchy. These, however, I apprehend, are but a small body. . . . Among the middling orders the Pope is held in contempt. His recent misfortunes are laughed at, and his ancient influence, through all its delegations, is nearly gone.'[2] The rebellion was clearly taking a form which the

[1] Castlereagh to Pelham, June 13; Castlereagh to Elliot, June 16 (*Pelham MSS.*); Castlereagh to Wickham (*Castlereagh Correspondence*, i. 219).

[2] J. W., June 6, 1798. In another letter he says: 'The secular clergy of Ireland, particularly those of Dublin, have not been the instigators of rebellion; the regulars it is who lighted the brand, and among those the younger were the most active, from their attachment to French politics. This class of men are the political preceptors of country schoolmasters—a class of men who, the judges well know, have been the most successful agitators.' (J. W., June 26, 1798.)

leaders had never anticipated or desired, and 'of this,' said McNally, 'I am well convinced, that numbers of those who were zealous as United Irishmen of the first society, are shocked at the present appearance of the country, and wish sincerely for peace. Many who have wished to carry the question of reform and emancipation, even by an armed body, such as the volunteers were, shudder at the enormities to be expected from an armed banditti.'[1]

'The principle,' he wrote in another letter, 'which forms the character of republicanism, I perceive, changes daily to that of religion. The object of Government, it is said by the organised and their adherents, is Protestant ascendency, and the destruction of Catholics and Dissenters. This insinuation comes most effectually from the clergy, and has a powerful influence on the lower classes. I do not confine my observation to the Catholic clergy, or to the Catholic bigots.' Infinite harm had been done by the acts and words of indiscreet Protestants. One officer is reported to have said, when a crowd of Catholics came to enlist in the yeomanry, 'These fellows are papists, and if we don't disarm them, they will cut our throats;' and such sayings, whether true or false, were sedulously repeated through the whole country. A report had been spread, 'that Government have determined not only on an union with England, but on reviving all the penal laws against the papists. From these and other causes, among which Orange emblems are not the weakest, old prejudices, old rancours, and old antipathies are reviving. Orange emblems, while they create animosities, strengthen the hopes of the United party. So few appear with them, that they cannot inspire fear, but they create hatred.' Another report was, that a priest named Bush had been cruelly whipped, and that he exclaimed under the torture, 'My Saviour suffered more for me than I have suffered.' The story, McNally said, may have been false, but it was industriously spread for the purpose of raising a spirit of retaliation. On the other hand, it was not true, as the official bulletin asserted, that it was the rebels who had set fire to Kildare. McNally had very recently seen a respectable gentleman, who had been present when that little town was in a blaze. Two-thirds of its houses had been burnt,

[1] J. W., June 13, 1798.

and the conflagration was due to the rank and file of the Dublin Militia, who were determined to avenge the murder of one of their officers.[1]

The time, McNally clearly saw and repeatedly urged, had come when the most terrible and enduring calamities could only be averted by a speedy clemency. There were bitter complaints of the whippings without trial. The soldiers were driving the people to the rebels. The severities were producing sullen, silent rancour. Executions were looked upon as merely murders; and when the procession for an execution commenced, all those within doors to whose knowledge it came, betook themselves to their prayers. On the other hand, it was now generally felt that any government is better than anarchy, and the great mass of industrious men only desired a rapid termination of the contest. 'I cannot presume to advise,' he writes; 'but take my opinion candidly. I do sincerely believe that all classes are heartily tired and terrified, and would willingly go almost any length for peace.' 'I do believe that zeal to the cause is now working in very few, except desperate adventurers and the proscribed; and I would venture to say, that a certainty of pardon would melt down the combination, strong as it appears.'[2]

It is easy, indeed, to understand the savage hatred that was arising. In times of violence the violent must rule, and events assume a very different shape from that in which they appear to unimaginative historians in a peaceful age. When men are engaged in the throes of a deadly struggle; when dangers, horrible, unknown, and unmeasured, encompass them at every step; when the probability not only of ruin, but of massacre, is constantly before their eyes; when every day brings its ghastly tales of torture, murder, and plunder, it is idle to look for the judgments and the feelings of philanthropists or philosophers. The tolerant, the large-minded, the liberal, the men who can discriminate between different degrees or classes of guilt, and weigh in a just balance opposing crimes, then disappear from the scene. A feverish atmosphere of mingled passion and panic is created, which at once magnifies, obscures, and distorts, and the strongest passions are most valued, for they bring most men

[1] J. W., June 12, 13, and also some undated letters, which were evidently written about the same time.

[2] I take these sentences from a number of letters, which are chiefly undated.

into the field, and make them most indifferent to danger and to death. The Catholic rebellion only became really formidable when the priests touched the one chord to which their people could heartily respond, and turned it into a religious war, and a scarcely less fierce fanaticism and thirst for vengeance had arisen to repress it.

A few lines from one of the letters of Alexander, will show the point of view of men who, without themselves sharing this fanaticism, were quite ready to make use of it, and who advocated a policy directly opposite to that of McNally. 'Affections,' he says, 'in Ireland decide upon everything. To calculate on our judgments is nonsense.' To the zeal, activity, and courage of the yeomanry, Dublin is mainly indebted for its tranquillity, and the whole country for its salvation. 'Nothing can equal their loyalty but their impatience,' and they are not a little offended by the reserve of the Government. It is true that 'the thorough knowledge every yeoman and loyal man has that (were he mean enough to meditate it) no retraction of conduct could save him,' secures Government a most decided, though sometimes a 'querulous support.' But it will not be possible for the Government much longer to adopt a restraining or moderating policy. 'All the Protestants are gradually arming,' and 'the Orangemen would rise if encouraged by the Government, and make a crusade if required.' 'Unless we trust, we cannot exist; and the man who first trusts the lower Irish, bespeaks their fidelity. . . . If Government does not use one of the two great bodies that exist in the State, they will in a short time combine against it.' The French Government might have survived the revolutionary storm if it had not by a dubious, compromising, and conceding policy placed itself outside all the parties and enthusiasms of the State. In Ireland, in the opinion of Alexander, it is the Whig Club, the policy of Grattan, and the concessions of the Government that have done the mischief, and that mischief can only be arrested by throwing away the scabbard and adopting the most uncompromising policy. 'We have heard and listened to the serpent hissing in Ireland, until we have been severely stung. Lords O'Neil and Mountjoy, Commoners McManus, who presided at the Dungannon meeting, have been the first victims of the rebels' fury, and they were the great advocates of the conceding

system. In private life the most obnoxious men are safe, and the prudent men, who conceived they stood well with both parties, find moderatisme (*sic*) as bad a trade as it was in France.'[1]

Higgins in one of his letters notices another element, which contributed much to the horror and the desperation of the struggle. It was the distress which inevitably followed from the complete paralysis of industry and credit. Weavers no longer gave employment to their workmen. English manufacturers would send over no goods except for immediate payment. Trade in all its branches was stagnant. No one ventured to embark on any enterprise stretching into the unknown future. 'As to bank-note currency,' he wrote, 'I do most solemnly assure you, that the shopkeepers and dealers laugh at any person, even buying an article, and asking change of a guinea note. These circumstances, distressing to the poor, with the exorbitant price of provisions, will occasion tradesmen out of employment to engage, for bread, in any dangerous enterprise.' Higgins pressed this fact upon the Government, as deserving their most earnest attention, and he reminded them that Chesterfield, who steered Ireland so wisely and so successfully during the Scotch troubles of 1745, had then made it one of his first objects to provide employment for the people, by undertaking great works of planting and cultivation in Phœnix Park.[2]

The clouds, however, were now at length clearing away. In a few days it became evident, that in Down and Antrim the insurrection was really suppressed, and that the remainder of Ulster was not disposed to follow their example, and at the same time the long-expected reinforcements from England at last arrived. On the 16th it was announced that five English regiments had landed at Waterford,[3] and immediately after, many English militia regiments volunteered to serve in Ireland. The King had no power to accept their offer without a special Act of Parliament, but such an Act was speedily carried, in spite of the violent opposition and protest of the English Whig Opposition,[4] while the Irish Parliament voted 500,000*l.* for their maintenance in Ireland.[5]

[1] Henry Alexander to Pelham, June 10, 1798. (*Pelham MSS.*)

[2] F. H., June 13, 1798. See, too, *Saunders's Newsletter*, June 15. Sheridan even attributed the rebellion mainly to want of employment and want of bread. (*Parl. Hist.* xxxiii. 1502.)

[3] *Saunders's Newsletter*, June 16.

[4] *Parl. Hist.* xxxiii. 1493–1512.

[5] *Saunders*, June 28, 29.

About 12,000 of the English militia came over, and the first regiments arrived before the end of June.[1] The rebellion, it is true, was then virtually over, but the presence of this great force did much to guard against its revival and against the dangers of invasion. Among other noblemen, the former viceroy, the Marquis of Buckingham, now came to Ireland at the head of a regiment of militia.

Gordon, who, from his long residence in the neighbourhood of Gorey, is by far the most competent, as he is also the most candid, historian of the proceedings of the rebels in that part of the county of Wexford, observes that there were fewer crimes committed there than in the southern parts of the county, and that they were certainly not unprovoked. The burning of houses by the yeomanry, the free quarters, the pitched caps, the trials by court-martial, and the shooting of prisoners without trial, went far to explain them. At the same time he observes that 'the war from the beginning, in direct violation of the oath of the United Irishmen, had taken a religious turn, as every civil war in the South or West of Ireland must be expected to take, by any man well acquainted with the prejudices of the inhabitants. The terms Protestant and Orangeman were almost synonymous, with the mass of the insurgents, and the Protestants whom they meant to favour were generally baptised into the Romish Church.'[2]

Gordon doubted much whether, in the event of a complete success of the rebellion, any large number of Protestants in Wexford would have been suffered to live, but he acknowledged that the actual murders in this part of the county were not numerous, and that 'many individuals had evinced much humanity in their endeavours to mitigate the fury of their associates.' A few houses in Gorey, and two country houses in its immediate neighbourhood, were burnt by the rebels, and they confined many prisoners in the market-house. Some persons, who were especially obnoxious to them, were piked or shot. One or two were tortured with the pitched cap, but the lives of the great majority

[1] See Musgrave, p. 559.

[2] Gordon, pp. 133, 134. 'So inveterately rooted,' he elsewhere says, 'are the prejudices of religious antipathy in the minds of the lower classes of Irish Romanists, that in any civil war, however originating from causes unconnected with religion, not all the efforts of their gentry, or even priests, to the contrary, could (if I am not exceedingly mistaken) restrain them from converting it into a religious quarrel.' (P. 285.)

of the prisoners were spared, and although they lived in constant fear of death, it is not certain that they were seriously ill treated. It appears, too, that loyalist families who had been unable to escape, still continued to live in the neighbourhood, for the most part unmolested, except that they were obliged to provide food for the rebels.[1]

A few days after the defeat at Arklow, the rebels evacuated Gorey and the whole of the neighbouring country. Many of them simply deserted from the ranks, and those who remained embodied, divided into two parties. The smaller one, carrying with them the prisoners, went to Wexford, while the main body penetrated into the county of Wicklow, and on June 17 attacked and burnt to the ground the little town of Tinnehely. It contained an active Protestant population, who had done good service in keeping their county in order, and it appears now to have been the scene of great atrocities. Many houses in its neighbourhood were burnt. 'Many persons,' writes Gordon, 'were put to death with pikes, under the charge of being Orangemen; and many more would have suffered, if they had not been spared at the humane intercession of a Romanist lady, a Mrs. Maher, in that neighbourhood.' The rebels placed a Catholic Wicklow gentleman, named Garret Byrne, at their head, and they seem to have been conducted with some ability. The yeomanry of the district, who, to the number of about five hundred men, had been concentrated at Hacketstown, found it hopeless to attack them; but General Dundas, with a large body of troops and a train of artillery, arrived at Tinnehely on the 18th, and it was thought that he could have easily crushed the rebels. They had retired, however, to a strong position on Kilcaven Hill, about two miles from Carnew; and although Dundas was speedily strengthened by a junction with General Loftus, he totally failed to surround or intercept them. On the 20th there was a cannonade between the two armies, which did little execution on either side; the English general then withdrew to Carnew, and the same night Byrne's army directed its march, unmolested, to Vinegar Hill.[2]

On the 19th the rebel force, which, under the command of

[1] Compare Gordon, pp. 133–137, with Byrne's *Memoirs*, i. 147–152.

[2] Gordon, pp. 133–138. The reader should, however, compare this account with that (differing in some details) given by Miles Byrne, who took part

Father Philip Roche, still occupied a height near New Ross, was surprised and compelled to retreat. One portion of it took the line to Vinegar Hill. The other and larger portion, after some fighting, in which the rebels showed more than usual skill, made its way to the Three Rocks, near Wexford.[1] The whole force of the rebellion in Wexford was thus concentrated in two centres, and the army at the disposal of General Lake was now amply sufficient to crush it. A great combined movement was speedily devised by Lake for surrounding Vinegar Hill. The failure of two brigades to arrive in time, deranged the plan of completely cutting off the retreat of the rebels; but on June 21, Vinegar Hill was stormed from several sides, by an army which was estimated by the rebels at 20,000 men, but which probably amounted to 13,000 or 14,000, and was supported by a powerful body of artillery. Against such a force, conducted by skilful generals, the ill-armed, ill-led, disorganised, and dispirited rebels had little chance. The chief brunt of the action was borne by the troops under Generals Johnston and Dundas. For an hour and a half the rebels maintained their position with great intrepidity, but then, seeing that they were on the point of being surrounded, they broke, and fled in wild confusion to Wexford, leaving the camp, which had been stained with so much Protestant blood, in the hands of the troops. Thirteen small cannon were taken there, but owing to the inexperience of the gunners, and the great deficiency of ammunition, they had been of little use. The loss of the King's troops in killed and wounded, appears to have been less than a hundred; while that of the rebels was probably five or six times as great.[2]

in this campaign. (Byrne's *Memoirs*, i. 148–163.) Byrne naturally minimises the number of murders by the rebels. He says that a clerical magistrate named Owens, who had been conspicuous in putting pitched caps on rebels, was among the prisoners at Gorey, and was not further punished than by a pitched cap; and he palliates the misdeeds of the party, by accusing the yeomen of murdering the wounded who were left on the field. He says nothing about the burning of Tinnehely, and represents rather more fighting as having taken place than appears from Gordon's narrative. He dishonestly calls Gordon 'the Orange historian.'

[1] Cloney gives a full account of the retreat, in which he took part. (*Personal Narrative*, pp. 54–60.) Compare 'The Journal of a Field Officer,' in Maxwell, p. 141, and Hay, pp. 200, 201.

[2] Compare the accounts of Musgrave, Gordon, Hay, and Byrne (who took part in the battle). Musgrave gives Lake's despatches in his Appendix.

Enniscorthy was at the same time taken, after some fighting in the streets. The troops, as usual, gave no quarter, and the historians in sympathy with the rebellion declare that the massacre extended to the wounded, to many who were only suspected of disaffection, and even to some loyalists who had been prisoners of the rebels. A Hessian regiment which had lately come over, was especially noticed for its indiscriminate ferocity. Many houses were set on fire, and among others one which was employed by the rebels as their hospital. It was consumed, and all who were in it perished. The number of the victims was at least fourteen, and one writer places it as high as seventy. The rebel historians describe this act as not less deliberate than the burning of the barn of Scullabogue. Gordon learnt, on what appeared to him good authority, 'that the burning was accidental; the bedclothes being set on fire by the wadding of the soldiers' guns, who were shooting the patients in their beds.'[1]

Nothing now remained but the capture of Wexford. This town, as we have seen, had been left in the hands of a Protestant gentleman named Keugh, who was one of the most conspicuous of a small group of brave and honourable men, who, under circumstances of extreme difficulty and danger, tried to give the rebellion a character of humanity, and to maintain it on the lines of the United Irishmen. He was powerfully supported by Edward Roche, who was a brother of Father Philip Roche, and himself a well-to-do farmer of the county. This man had been sergeant in a yeomanry regiment, and had deserted to the rebels, with most of the Catholics in his troop, at the beginning of the rebellion. He was soon after elected 'a general officer of the United army of the county of Wexford;'[2] and he issued, on June 7, a very remarkable proclamation to the rebels at Wexford. After congratulating his followers on the success that had so far attended their arms, and dilating on the supreme importance of maintaining a strict discipline, he proceeded: 'In the moment

[1] Gordon, p. 145; Hay, p. 228; Cloney, p. 47. Taylor, who is a strongly loyal historian, mentions that the loyalist prisoners were, by mistake, slaughtered by the soldiers. (P. 119.) General Lake, in reporting the victory at Vinegar Hill, says: 'The troops behaved excessively well in action, but their determination to destroy every one they think a rebel is beyond description, and wants much correction.' (*Castlereagh Correspondence*, i. 223.)

[2] See, for many particulars about Edward Roche, Crofton Croker's notes to Holt's *Memoirs*, i. 65–69.

of triumph, my countrymen, let not your victories be tarnished with any wanton act of cruelty; many of those unfortunate men now in prison are not your enemies from principle; most of them, compelled by necessity, were obliged to oppose you. Neither let a difference in religious sentiments cause a difference among the people. Recur to the debates in the Irish House of Lords on February 19 last; you will there see a patriotic and enlightened Protestant bishop [Down], and many of the lay lords, with manly eloquence pleading for Catholic emancipation and parliamentary reform, in opposition to the haughty arguments of the Lord Chancellor, and the powerful opposition of his fellow-courtiers. To promote a union of brotherhood and affection among our countrymen of all religious persuasions, has been our principal object. We have sworn in the most solemn manner; have associated for this laudable purpose, and no power on earth shall shake our resolution. To my Protestant soldiers I feel much indebted for their gallant behaviour in the field, where they exhibited signal proofs of bravery in the cause.'[1]

A number of respectable inhabitants of Wexford, among whom the Catholic priests deserve a prominent place,[2] rallied round Keugh and Roche, and, at the constant risk of their own lives, preserved Wexford for some weeks from the horrors of Vinegar Hill and Scullabogue. The difficulty of their task was enormous, for they had to deal with fierce, fanatical, and sometimes drunken mobs, led by men who had sprung from the very dregs of the people, and maddened by accounts of military excesses, which were almost daily brought into the town by the

[1] Hay, pp. 162, 163.

[2] Musgrave has done the utmost in his power to blacken the Catholic priests in Wexford; but nothing can be stronger than the testimony in their favour, of Jackson, who was an Englishman, a Protestant, and a loyalist, and who was prisoner in Wexford during the whole siege. He says: 'The conduct of the Roman Catholic clergy of Wexford cannot be too much commended. Dr. Caulfield, the titular Bishop of Leighlin and Ferns, Father Curran, Father Broe, and, indeed, the whole of the priests and friars of that town, on all occasions used their interest and exerted their abilities in the cause of humanity. Every Sunday, after mass, they addressed their audience, and implored them in the most earnest manner not to ill-treat their prisoners, and not to have upon their consciences the reflection of having shed innocent blood.' (Jackson, *Narrative*, p. 54.) The same writer says: 'From what I saw while I was in confinement, or could learn, I think myself bound to say that, in my opinion, such of the rebel chiefs as had been in respectable situations, detested the system of murder and robbery, which was as universally adopted by the upstart officers and unruly mob, over whom they had little more than a nominal command.' (P. 43.)

many fugitives who sought refuge within it. It was necessary to give some satisfaction to the more violent party, and a regular tribunal was formed to try those who had committed crimes against the people. I have already spoken of the manner in which two informers named Murphy were put to death, and on June 6, the day after the battle of New Ross, a party of rebels came to Wexford from Enniscorthy, probably by order of the revolutionary tribunal on Vinegar Hill, and after some resistance carried ten prisoners from that town, who were in Wexford gaol, back to Enniscorthy, and executed them there.[1] About ten days later another party from the same town, having, it is said, overpowered the guard at Wexford gaol, carried four more prisoners to Vinegar Hill, where they were put to death.[2] A proclamation was issued at Wexford, on June 9, declaring, in the name 'of the people of the county of Wexford,' that four magistrates, who were mentioned by name, had committed 'the most horrid acts of cruelty, violence, and oppression,' and calling on all Irishmen to make every exertion to lodge them in Wexford gaol, for trial 'before the tribunal of the people.'[3]

Such measures, however, were far from satisfying the Wexford mob, and the rebel leaders themselves, and especially those who were Protestants, were in constant, daily danger. On one occasion especially, Keugh and the committee who acted with him in managing the town, were attacked by a mob, and Keugh was accused of being a traitor, in league with the Orangemen; but his eloquence and presence of mind, the ascendency of a strong character, and the support of a few attached friends, enabled him to surmount the opposition.[4] Crowds of Protestants, however, who had already received protections from the priests, now

[1] Compare Gordon, pp. 149, 150; Jackson, pp. 24, 25.

[2] Hay, p. 199.

[3] Jackson, p. 50.

[4] Gordon, pp. 147, 148. Musgrave, pp. 464–466. Musgrave says: 'I have heard, from the concurrent testimony of different persons who resided at Wexford at this time, that nothing but the humane and active interference of Generals Keugh and Harvey prevented that indiscriminate slaughter of Protestants there, which took place in many other parts of the country, particularly at Vinegar Hill; but when they lost their authority, the bloody work began. . . . Some of the gentlemen confined in the prison ship, assured me that the rebel guards frequently inveighed against Keugh, and vowed vengeance against him because he would not indulge the people—that is, because he did his utmost to restrain their desire for carnage.' (Pp. 465, 466.)

came to the Catholic chapels with their children to be baptised, believing that this was their one chance of safety. It is but justice to add, that some priests objected strongly to these forced and manifestly insincere conversions, and only consented to accept them at the urgent entreaty of men who believed that their lives were at stake. Even Bagenal Harvey, and the other Protestant leaders, though they did not abjure Protestantism, thought it advisable to clear themselves from suspicion of Orangism, by attending the Catholic chapel.[1] At the same time, some Protestants in Wexford appear to have remained at large and unmolested, during the whole occupation, and among them was the Protestant rector, who was much beloved on account of his kindness to the poor.[2]

The Protestants, however, who had excited suspicion or unpopularity, were soon confined under a strong guard, which was the only means of securing their lives. The gaol, the market-house, one of the barracks, and one or two ships in the harbour, were filled with them, and about 260 male Protestants were in custody.[3] The prisoners confined in one of the ships appear to have been treated with much harshness by the captain, but on their complaint they were brought back to land, and William Kearney and Patrick Furlong, who were placed at the head of the gaol, discharged their task with distinguished humanity and courage. Protestant women were not imprisoned, and although they endured terrible agonies of anxiety,[4] they were treated on the whole with great forbearance, and appear to have suffered no outrage. 'Several persons,' McNally wrote to the Government on June 13, 'who have escaped from Wexford, say that the insurgents there have treated the women with great respect, that sentinels have been placed on the houses where Mrs. Ogle and other ladies reside, to protect them from insult, and that nothing like religious persecution has taken place.'[5]

[1] Jackson, p. 53.

[2] Gordon, p. 147; Hay, pp. 142–145. I have mentioned the desire of the more respectable rebel leaders that the Protestant service should continue; but Barrington pretends that the rector was compelled to conform to Catholicism.

[3] Taylor, p. 81; Hay, p. 126.

[4] I have already quoted the very interesting diary of Mrs. Adams, published in Croker's *Researches in the South of Ireland*. A short fragment of the diary of another lady, who was in the town, is given by Musgrave.

[5] J. W., June 13, 1798.

The fact that Lord Kingsborough was among the prisoners, added not a little to the embarrassment of Keugh. Apart from considerations of humanity, it was a matter of manifest policy to preserve a hostage of such importance; but as Lord Kingsborough had commanded the North Cork Militia, he was peculiarly obnoxious to the people. Again and again mobs assembled round the house where he was confined, demanding his execution; but by the courageous interposition of the principal inhabitants, and especially of the Catholic bishop, Dr. Caulfield, he was preserved unscathed. The leader of the more violent party appears to have been a man named Thomas Dixon, who was the captain and part proprietor of a trading vessel in the bay, and who had obtained some rank in the rebel force. He seems to have been indefatigable in inciting the people to murder, and his wife powerfully seconded him. A pitched cap, which was said to have been found in the barracks of the North Cork Militia, was carried on a pike through the streets, and a warrant was shown authorising a sergeant of the regiment to found an Orange lodge.[1] Nearly every Protestant was suspected of being an Orangeman, and the belief that Orangemen had sworn to exterminate the Catholics was almost universal.

The Orange Society took great pains to repudiate this calumny. It had been introduced into Dublin in 1797, and soon after, by order of the different lodges, an address, signed by the recognised leaders of the society, was drawn up and widely published, in which the members declared their perfect loyalty and their readiness to serve the Crown against any enemy, but, at the same time, disclaimed all persecuting intentions. 'We solemnly assure you,' they said, 'in the presence of Almighty God, that the idea of injuring any one on account of his religious opinion, never entered our hearts. We regard every loyal subject as a friend, be his religion what it may: we have no enemy but the enemies of our country.'[2] Many respectable Catholics had signed an address, declaring their loyalty and detestation of the rebellion, and this address at once elicited a response from one of the largest Orange associations in Ulster. 'We have

[1] Hay, pp. 175, 176.

[2] *Saunders's Newsletter*, June 19, 1798. This address appears to have been drawn up in February. See Cupple's *Principles of the Orange Association* (1799).

with the greatest pleasure,' they said, 'seen declarations of loyalty from many congregations of our Roman Catholic brethren, in the sincerity of which we declare our firm confidence, and assure them, in the face of the whole world, and of the Being we both worship, though under different religious forms, that, however the common enemies of all loyal men may misrepresent the Orangemen, we consider every loyal subject as our brother and our friend, let his religious profession be what it may. We associate to suppress rebellion and treason, not any mode of worship. We have no enmity but to the enemies of our country.'[1]

Such declarations could hardly penetrate to the great masses of the ignorant rebels, and they drank in readily the charges against the Orangemen, which were sedulously spread, and which were strengthened by the many acts of lawless violence that were perpetrated by the yeomen. Bishop Caulfield, afterwards describing this period to Archbishop Troy, stated that, during the first fortnight of the rebel rule of Wexford, the priests were usually able to secure the safety of the Protestants, but that after this 'the evil, sanguinary spirit broke loose, and no protection availed. . . It soon became treason to plead for protection, for they were all Orangemen, and would destroy us all.' In spite of the peculiar sanctity which in Ireland has always attached to a Catholic bishop, Dr. Caulfield declares that, when he attempted to prevent murder, his own life was in imminent danger. He was told that his house would be pulled down or burnt, and his head knocked off. Three or four priests supported him with great courage and devotion, but the rest appear to have been completely scared and cowed by the fierce elements around them. They 'dared not show themselves or speak, for fear of pikes,' and they more than once fled in terror to a vessel in the harbour.[2]

A curious incident occurred, which paints vividly the terror and the credulity that prevailed. There was a certain Colonel Le Hunte, who, though a Protestant, had lived for some time, apparently without disturbance, in a house in Wexford, but his country house, which lay within a few miles of the town, was searched by a party under the leadership of Dixon. It was found that the drawing-room contained some furniture

[1] *Faulkner's Journal*, June 16, 1798. [2] Plowden, ii. 750, 751.

of an orange colour, and among other articles two fire-screens, decorated with orange ribbons and ornamented with various mythological figures, such as Hope with her anchor, Minerva with her spear, blindfolded Justice, Vulcan and the Cyclops, Ganymede and the eagle. Dixon at once told the people that he had found the meeting place and the insignia of the Orangemen, and that these mysterious figures represented different forms of torture, by which it was intended to put Catholic men, women, and children to death. He carried the screens through the streets of Wexford, and speedily raised an ungovernable mob. They attacked the house where Colonel Le Hunte was staying and would have murdered him in a few moments, if two Catholic gentlemen had not, at the imminent risk of their lives, interfered, pushed back the pikes which were directed against them, and, by persuading the people that so grave a case demanded a regular trial, succeeded in placing him in the security of the prison. The mob were, however, so furious at being denied immediate vengeance, that the lives of the whole town committee were for some time in the utmost danger.[1]

All this portended that the rebel rule in Wexford would not end without a great catastrophe. English ships of war were seen hovering around the town, and soon some gunboats blocked the harbour, preventing all escape by sea, while from the land side, fugitives poured daily in, bringing gloomy tidings of the failure of the rebellion, of the burning of their houses, and of the fury of the troops. Father Philip Roche, with the greater part of the force with which he had retreated from Lacken Hill, near New Ross, was now at the old rebel encampment on the Three Rocks, outside Wexford, and he came alone into Wexford to seek for support to attack General Moore, who was marching from the neighbourhood of New Ross, to join in the attack against Vinegar Hill. Early on the morning of the 20th, the drum beat in Wexford, and the whole armed population, except a few guards, were ordered to march to the camp at Three Rocks,[2] and that afternoon they attacked Moore's troops at a place called Goffsbridge, or Foulkes Mill, near the church of Horetown. The

[1] Hay, pp. 197, 198; Musgrave, pp. 470, 471; Gordon, pp. 148, 149; Plowden, ii. 741, 742; Jackson's *Personal Narrative*, pp. 44–46.

[2] Hay, pp. 204–207.

rebels are said to have been skilfully led, and they fought with great obstinacy for about four hours, when they were beaten back and retired to the Three Rocks.[1]

It was on that afternoon, when the chiefs and the bulk of the armed population were absent from the town, that the massacre of Wexford bridge took place. Dixon, disobeying the orders of his superiors, refused to leave Wexford with the other captains, and he had a great mob who were devoted to him. They were not, it appears, inhabitants of the town, but countrymen from the neighbourhood. On the preceding night, he had brought into the town seventy men from the northern side of the Slaney, and he had himself gone through the district of Shilmalier, which was thronged with fugitives from the country about Gorey, calling them to come to Wexford to defend the deserted town.[2] He distributed much whisky among his followers, and, at the head of a large crowd, he took possession of the gaol and market-house, and brought out the prisoners to be murdered, in batches of ten, fifteen, and twenty. A few were shot in the gaol and in the market-place, but by far the greater number were hurried to the bridge. A black flag bearing the symbol of the Redemption, and with the letters M.W.S., was carried before them.[3] Dixon and his wife, both on horseback, presided, and a vast crowd, containing, it is said, more women than men, accompanied the

[1] Hay, pp. 226, 227. See, too, Maxwell, pp. 141, 142, and Sir John Moore's despatches, describing the battle, in Musgrave, Appendix, pp. 156, 157.

[2] This is the statement of Hay (pp. 207–213), and it is confirmed by better authority. Bishop Caulfield, in a private letter to Archbishop Troy, says: 'I could not find that there were more than two or three of this town engaged in the massacres, for the townsmen had been that morning ordered out to camp near Enniscorthy, and a horde of miscreants, like so many bloodhounds, rushed in from the country, and swore they would burn the town if the prisoners were not given up to them.' (Plowden, ii. 751.) Lord Kingsborough also, as we shall see, distinctly exculpated the townsmen from complicity in the massacre.

[3] Musgrave (p. 485) and Taylor (p. 121) say that these letters were believed to mean 'murder without sin,' an interpretation which appears to me incredible. If the rebels wished to convey this sentiment, they could have done so much more clearly: they would not have used the invidious term 'murder;' and it is exceedingly improbable that a banner intended to convey such a meaning, should have been prepared beforehand. Hay says that this black flag had been carried by one particular corps through the whole rebellion, and a member of that corps told Crofton Croker that the letters signified only, 'Marksmen, Wexford, Shilmalier.' Shilmalier was the barony of Wexford, most famous for its marksmen, and also, as we have seen, that from which most of the actors in this tragedy seem to have come. (See a note to Holt's *Memoirs*, i. 89, 90.)

prisoners, most of them shouting with savage delight, though some dropped on their knees and prayed. The prisoners were placed in rows of eighteen or twenty, and the pikemen pierced them one by one, lifted them writhing into the air, held them up for a few moments before the yelling multitude, and then flung their bodies into the river. One man sprang over the battlement, and was shot in the water. Ninety-seven prisoners are said to have been murdered, and the tragedy was prolonged for more than three hours. So much blood covered the bridge, that it is related that, when Dixon and his wife endeavoured to ride over it, their frightened horses refused to proceed, and they were obliged to dismount, Mrs. Dixon holding up her riding habit lest it should be reddened in the stream.

One priest courageously attempted to stop the murders. Whether the many others who were present in Wexford were paralysed by fear, or ignorant of what was taking place, or conscious that they would be utterly impotent before a furious drunken mob, will never be known.[1] Happily the tragedy was not fully consummated. Lord Kingsborough, who was guarded in a private house, was not molested. Some prisoners in the gaol succeeded in concealing themselves,[2] and the great majority had not been brought out from their different places of confinement, when Edward Roche, followed shortly after by Dick Munk, the shoeblack captain, galloped into the town, and crying out that Vinegar Hill was invested, and that every man was needed to repel the troops, succeeded in drawing away the crowd, and putting an end to the massacre. A few prisoners, half dead with fear, who were still on the bridge, were taken back to the gaol.[3]

[1] Taylor and Musgrave have accused Bishop Caulfield of having refused, when asked, to interfere to prevent the massacre; but the bishop published a pamphlet in which he most solemnly denied the charge, and declared that, as he was in his house at some considerable distance from the scene, he knew nothing of what was passing. (*Reply of the Rev. Dr. Caulfield, and of the R.C. Clergy of Wexford, to the Misrepresentations of Sir R. Musgrave* (1801). The courageous interposition of Father Curran is undoubted; but there is a difference of statement about how far it was effectual. Caulfield, in his letter to Archbishop Troy, gives a vivid picture of the terror of the priests. (See Plowden, ii. 749–751, 761.)

[2] Col. Le Hunte was one of these.

[3] I have given the best account I can of this massacre; but the reader who will compare the original authorities, will find numerous inconsistencies and discrepancies among them. Jackson, who wrote his *Personal Narrative*, was actually kneeling on the bridge, waiting his turn to be

The end was now very nearly come. Three armies were on the march to Wexford, and it was plainly indefensible. In the night of the 20th, Keugh and the principal inhabitants took counsel together, and they agreed that the only chance for safety was to endeavour to obtain terms, and that the only means of accomplishing this was by the help of Lord Kingsborough. They desired to save their own lives, to prevent the town from being given up to the mercy of an infuriated soldiery, and also to avert a general massacre of the remaining prisoners, and perhaps of the whole Protestant population, which would probably take place before the arrival of the troops, if the rebels were driven to absolute desperation. Bishop Caulfield and the other leading priests took an active part in these discussions, and Lord Kingsborough fully entered into their views. Lord Kingsborough at first proposed that he should himself go to meet the troops, but this plan was rejected, and early on the morning of the 21st, Keugh formally placed the government of Wexford in his hands, with the assent of the chief inhabitants of the town. Lord Kingsborough on his side agreed, as far as lay in his power, that 'they should all be protected in person and property, murderers excepted, and those who had instigated others to commit murder; hoping that these terms might be ratified, as he had pledged his honour in the most solemn manner to have these terms fulfilled, on the town being surrendered to him, the Wexford men not being concerned in the massacre which was perpetrated by country people in their absence.'[1] Dr. Jacob, who had been the mayor of the town

piked, when the rescue came. Taylor was one of the forty-eight prisoners who were confined in the market-place, and one of nineteen who were saved. (*Hist. of the Rebellion*, p. 124.) Musgrave, who relates the story with his usual research, and his usual violent and evident partisanship, gives an account which, he says, he received from eye-witnesses, who were in a house close to the bridge. (Pp. 485–487.) Hay—who is quite as violent a partisan on one side as Musgrave on the other—was in the town, and (according to his own account) exerted himself greatly to prevent the massacre. His long and confused story differs in several respects from the others, and he pretends (p. 221) that only thirty-six persons were murdered. This is inconsistent with the statements of the other writers, and the long period during which the tragedy was going on makes it very improbable. Gordon gives a list of 'some of the persons massacred on the bridge of Wexford,' which comprises fifty-three names. (Appendix, pp. 62, 63.) Bishop Caulfield, in a letter evidently not meant for publication, says the rebels called the prisoners out 'by dozens' to be executed. (Plowden, ii. 750.)

[1] See an interesting letter written in 1799 by Captain Bourke, an officer of the North Cork Militia (who had

previous to the insurrection, was at the same time invited to resume his functions. Captain McManus, a liberated prisoner, accompanied by Hay, was at once sent to meet General Moore with the offer of surrender signed by Keugh, and 'by order of the inhabitants of the town of Wexford.' It stated that the envoys were 'appointed by the inhabitants of all religious persuasions to inform the officer commanding the King's troops, that they were ready to deliver up the town of Wexford without opposition, lay down their arms, and return to their allegiance, provided their persons and property were guaranteed by the commanding officer; and that they would use every influence in their power to induce the people of the country at large to return to their allegiance also.'[1]

Accompanying these proposals was an urgent letter from Lord Kingsborough, supporting the offer of capitulation, which, he wrote, 'I hope, for the sake of the prisoners here, who are very numerous, and of the first respectability in the country, will be complied with. The people here have treated their prisoners with great humanity, and I believe will return to their allegiance with the greatest satisfaction.' In a postscript he adds: 'Since I have written the within (*sic*), the inhabitants have come to the resolution of investing the mayor, Dr. Jacob, in his authority, and have liberated all the prisoners. I at present command here, and have promised them the within terms will be agreed to.'[2]

Moore had no power to accept such a capitulation, but he at once transmitted these letters to General Lake, who replied by a blunt and absolute refusal. 'Lieutenant-General Lake,' he answered, 'cannot attend to any terms offered by rebels in arms against their sovereign. While they continue so, he must use the force entrusted to him with the utmost energy for their destruction. To the deluded multitude he promises pardon on their delivering into his hands their leaders, surrendering their arms, and returning with sincerity to their allegiance.'[3] This

been captured with Lord Kingsborough), describing the negotiation, and authenticated by Lord Kingsborough (then Lord Kingston) himself. (Hay's *Hist.*, Appendix, pp. xxviii–xxx.) It appears, from this letter, that Keugh was at first reluctant to surrender the government of Wexford, and that this step was taken on the motion of Hay.

[1] Ibid. See, too, Musgrave, pp 498, 499.

[2] Record Office.

[3] *Annual Register*, 1798 p. 128

answer, however, was not known in Wexford till after the surrender had been accomplished.

The situation there during all that day was perilous in the extreme. That morning the distant cannonade of the battle at Vinegar Hill was distinctly heard, and in a few hours the defeated rebels who had escaped, came pouring into the town by thousands. The worst consequences might be anticipated from the presence of this vast, disorganised, infuriated, and panic-stricken crowd, with arms in their hands; and Lord Kingsborough and Keugh, who appear to have acted in close concert, went in much alarm to the Catholic bishop. They represented that if the rebel army 'continued any time in the town, they would proceed to murder all the prisoners, . . . and that if the troops should overtake them in town, they would make a general slaughter of them, and perhaps indiscriminately of the inhabitants, and reduce the town to ashes; that the only means of preventing these shocking disasters, was to get the rebels out of town; that a strong representation of their own danger, and of Lord Kingsborough's negotiations with the military commanders and Government, would have more weight with the rebels than any exhortations or consideration of duty.'[1] By the combined exertions of Keugh and of the Catholic bishop and clergy, the rebel force was induced to leave the town, one portion of them marching into the barony of Forth, and the other in the opposite direction, crossing the bridge to the eastern side of the Slaney. Keugh, relying probably on the engagements of Lord Kingsborough, and determined at all hazards to use his great influence to the very last, to save the town from the imminent danger of massacre and plunder, refused to leave it; and chiefly through his efforts, that terrible day passed in Wexford unstained by blood. 'There was no prisoner put to death,' wrote Bishop Caulfield, 'no Protestant murdered, no houses burnt (though several of the rebels threatened, and some of them attempted to set fire to the town). No disaster took place, all was saved.'

Hay, pp. 242–244. In a letter to Castlereagh, Lake says: 'You will see by the inclosed letter and address from Wexford, what an unpleasant situation I am led into by Lord Kingsborough.' (*Castlereagh Correspondence*, i. 223.)

[1] See Bishop Caulfield's statement of his conduct. (Plowden, ii. 738, 739.)

Lord Kingsborough sent another messenger to General Moore, but he never reached his destination, for he was shot by a rebel whom he had met upon his way. General Moore soon arrived within a mile of Wexford, and could see the rebel army retreating, and he received one of the liberated prisoners, who gave him an assurance of the peaceful disposition of the townspeople. Moore's troops, like all who were employed in Wexford, were in a state of wild undiscipline, and in spite of the utmost efforts of the brave and humane commander, they had committed numerous outrages on their march. Moore, wishing to save Wexford, encamped his army beyond its borders; but Captain Boyd, the member for the town, entered it with a small number of yeomen, and was soon after followed by two companies of the Queen's Royals, who, without resistance, took possession of it. Thus, on June 21, Wexford once more passed under the dominion of the King, having been for twenty-three days in possession of the rebels.

If Moore, or any other general of ability, humanity, and tact, had held the supreme command in Wexford, the rebellion would probably have at once terminated. But now, as ever, Lake acted with a brutal, stupid, and undiscriminating severity, that was admirably calculated to intensify and to prolong the conflagration. The general rule that in rebellions, offers of clemency should be held out to the ignorant masses, while the leaders should be treated with severity, may be justified by evident considerations both of equity and of policy, but, like every maxim of political conduct, its application should depend largely on the special circumstances of the case. There is a wide difference between men who have fomented, organised, and directed a rebellion, and men who, finding themselves in the midst of a rebellion which they had not made, were compelled, under pain of death, to take a leading part in it, or were induced to do so in order to prevent it from degenerating into a mere scene of massacre and plunder, or because they believed that they could not, in a time of danger, honourably abandon their people. In the great convulsions of the State, men should not be judged only on technical grounds of legal guilt, but rather by the general course of their conduct, motives, and influence. In most cases, no doubt, the peace of a nation is

best secured by striking severely at the leaders of rebellion, but it is sometimes through clemency to these that it can be most speedily and most effectually restored.

Neither Lake nor Castlereagh showed the least regard for these considerations. The first proceeding of the commander-in-chief was to issue a proclamation for the arrest of the leaders, and Lord Kingsborough's negotiation had made this peculiarly easy. Father Philip Roche, perceiving the rebellion to be hopeless, desired to negotiate for his troops on the Three Rocks, a capitulation like that of the rebels at Wexford, and in order to do so, he boldly came down alone and unarmed. On his way he was seized, dragged off his horse, so kicked and buffeted, that he was said to have been scarcely recognisable, then tried by court-martial, and hanged off Wexford Bridge. He met his fate with a dogged, defiant courage, declaring that the insurgents in Wexford had been deceived, that they had expected a general insurrection through Ireland, and that if the other counties had done their duty, they would have succeeded. Military men, who had watched the conduct of this priest during his short command, and who discussed the chief battles of the rebellion with him before his execution, are said to have come to the conclusion that he of all the rebel leaders was the most formidable, for he had a true eye for military combinations. The result of his arrest was that the main body of rebels on the Three Rocks, under the command of another priest, at once marched towards the county of Carlow, to add one more bloody page to the rebellion.[1]

Another, and a more interesting victim, was Matthew Keugh, the rebel governor of Wexford. Having refused to abandon the town, he was at the mercy of the Government, and he was at once tried by court-martial, and condemned to death. Musgrave has noticed the eminent dignity, eloquence, and pathos of his defence, and his unalterable courage in the face of death, and he seemed chiefly anxious to show that he had no part or lot in the massacre of Wexford Bridge. Lord Kingsborough, Colonel Le Hunte, and several other respectable witnesses came forward, and proved that he had acted

[1] Compare Plowden, ii. 763; Musgrave, p. 507; and the remarks of the 'Field Officer' in Maxwell, p. 141.

on all occasions with singular humanity, that he had uniformly endeavoured to prevent the effusion of blood, and that they owed their lives to his active interference. It is certain, indeed, that it was mainly due to him that Wexford, until the day before its surrender, was almost unstained by the horrors that were so frequent at Vinegar Hill, and that its surrender was at last peacefully effected; and it is equally certain that Keugh had again and again risked his life in stemming the rising tide of fanaticism and blood. Urgent representations were made to Lake to take these circumstances into consideration, but Lake was determined to show his firmness. Keugh was hanged off Wexford Bridge; his head was severed from his body, and fixed on a pike before the court house in Wexford, while his body was thrown into the river.

In a strictly legal point of view, the position of Lake was no doubt unassailable, and this was probably the only consideration that presented itself to his mind. It is clear that Lord Kingsborough had no authority to pledge the Government to spare the lives and properties of the Wexford insurgents, though by making this engagement he probably saved the town from destruction, and the prisoners and other Protestant inhabitants from murder. It is clear, too, that Keugh had been a leading figure in the rebellion, and the fact that he had risen by his ability during the American war from the position of private to that of captain in the King's army, and was actually in the receipt of half-pay when the rebellion broke out, aggravated his situation. Nor is it likely that he was one of those who joined reluctantly, fearing death if they refused. In America his mind, like that of many others, had received a republican bias. His sympathy with the United Irishmen had been long avowed, and had led to his removal from the magistracy in 1796, and all accounts represent him as a man of commanding courage and conspicuous ability, much more likely to influence than to be influenced. There is no proof that he instigated the rebellion; but when it had taken place, and when he found himself called by acclamation to a post of prominence and danger, he unhesitatingly accepted it. How he acted in a position which was one of the most difficult that could fall to any human being, has been already told. In some cases, no doubt, as in the execu-

tion of the Murphys and the surrender of the Enniscorthy prisoners, he was compelled to yield to an irresistible clamour; but on the whole, the ascendency which this humane and moderate Protestant gentleman maintained in Wexford during three terrible weeks, in which the surrounding country had been made a hideous scene of mutual carnage, forms one of the few bright spots in the dark and shameful history I am relating. He was a man of competent fortune, well connected, and exceedingly popular, and his persuasive eloquence, as well as a great personal beauty, which is said to have survived even in death,[1] no doubt contributed to his influence. It is scarcely probable that it could have continued. In the last days of his rule it was visibly waning, and Keugh is himself said to have predicted that he would not have lived forty-eight hours after the complete triumph of the rebellion. He received the consolations of religion from the clergyman of Wexford, who had been preserved by his protection, and he died declaring that his only object had been to reform and improve the Constitution.[2]

Several other executions either accompanied or immediately followed the executions of Roche and Keugh, but only three need be referred to here. There was Cornelius Grogan, the infirm and almost half-witted, but very wealthy, country gentleman, who had been brought into Wexford immediately after its surrender to the rebels. Though he had once been an Opposition

[1] Barrington was at Wexford shortly after the rebellion, and saw the heads of the leaders outside the court house. He says: 'The mutilated countenances of friends and relations in such a situation would, it may be imagined, give any man most horrifying sensations! The heads of Colclough and Harvey appeared black lumps, the features being utterly undistinguishable; that of Keogh was uppermost, but the air had made no impression on it whatever. His comely and respect-inspiring face (except the pale hue, scarcely to be called livid), was the same as in life. His eyes were not closed, his hair not much ruffled—in fact, it appeared to me rather as a head of chiselled marble, with glass eyes, than as the lifeless remains of a human creature. This circumstance I never could get any medical man to give the least explanation of.' (Barrington's *Personal Sketches*, i. 276, 277.)

[2] Interesting notices of Keugh will be found in Gordon, Taylor, Jackson, and Musgrave. Compare, too, the vivid sketch in Barrington's *Personal Recollections*, iii. 296–298. Keugh had an elder brother—an enthusiastic loyalist—who lived with him. When the rebellion broke out, and Matthew Keugh became a rebel leader, the loyalist brother was driven to such despair, that he blew out his own brains. In spelling the name of the Wexford governor, I have followed most of the Wexford writers, as well as Musgrave and Lord Castlereagh; but Barrington (who was related to him) calls him Keogh; and Taylor, Keughe.

member of Parliament, and though he was on friendly terms with some persons who joined in the rebellion, nothing in his former life or conversation gave the slightest reason for believing that he had any sympathy with the United Irishmen, or any knowledge of their plans, until the day when he found his place occupied by the rebels, and himself a prisoner in their hands. Whether he was compelled by force to join them, or whether, as was maintained by the Government, he was induced to do so in order to save his house from plunder and his property from ultimate confiscation, it is difficult to say. An old, feeble invalid, with no strength of intellect or character, he was very passive in their hands. He was quite incapable of appearing in the field or, indeed, of holding a weapon, but the rebels gave him the title of commissary—it is said, through the belief that this would make his numerous tenants more willing to supply them—and it was proved that he signed an order for a woman to receive some bread from the rebel stores. After the surrender of Wexford, he was carried back to his own country house, where he made no attempt to conceal himself. He was at once seized, tried and condemned by a court-martial which appears to have been in many respects exceedingly irregular, and hanged off Wexford Bridge. The spectacle of this feeble old man, with his long white hair streaming over his shoulders, wrapped in flannels and tottering on his crutches painfully but very placidly to the gallows, was certainly not fitted to inspire the people with much reverence for the law, and it is said that Bagenal Harvey, who was executed at the same time, openly declared that, whoever might be guilty, Grogan at least was wholly innocent. Like Sir Edward Crosbie, he had an old faithful servant, who stole his head from the pike on which it was transfixed, and secured for it a Christian burial.[1]

[1] A number of facts from different quarters about Grogan, have been brought together by Dr. Madden. (*United Irishmen*, iv. 502–513.) Compare Musgrave, pp. 447, 448; Appendix, p. 135. Barrington, who had known Grogan intimately for several years, declares most emphatically that he was 'no more a rebel than his brothers, who signalised themselves in battle as loyalists;' and he speaks very strongly of the illegal constitution of the court-martial that tried him. (*Personal Recollections*, iii. 298–300.) There is an elaborate examination, and a very severe condemnation of this court-martial, in a privately printed law book, called *Reports of Interesting Cases argued in Ireland* (1824), by R. Radford Rowe. A long chapter is devoted to the Irish courts-martial.

Bagenal Harvey at first believed that the engagement of Lord Kingsborough would secure his life, and retired from Wexford to his own country house; but on learning that no terms would be granted to the leaders, he fled with a young and popular country gentleman named John Colclough, a member of one of the leading families in Wexford, who like himself had taken part in the rebellion. The two fugitives, together with the wife and child of Colclough, were concealed in a cavern in one of the Saltee Islands, but were soon discovered and brought to Wexford. They were both undoubtedly guilty of treason. Colclough, though he had taken no prominent part in the rebellion, and had certainly no concern in any of its atrocities, had been in the rebel ranks in the battle of New Ross. Bagenal Harvey, as we have seen, had been marked out by his known and avowed sympathies as a leader of the rebellion in Wexford, and had been for a short time its acknowledged commander-in-chief. His claims, however, to the clemency of the Government were very powerful. When Wexford was first threatened by the rebels, the King's representative in it had not hesitated to implore Harvey to use his influence to obtain favourable terms, and it was chiefly through that influence that the capture of the town had been almost unstained by blood. His acceptance of the post of commander of the rebels, was probably quite as much due to compulsion as to his desire. He saved many lives, and he steadily set his face against murder and outrage. It is, however, one of the worst features of the repression in Ireland, that such considerations were scarcely ever attended to, and were sometimes even made use of against the prisoner. 'The display of humanity by a rebel,' writes the most temperate and most truthful of the loyal historians, 'was in general, in the trials by court-martial, by no means regarded as a circumstance in favour of the accused. Strange as it may seem in times of cool reflection, it was very frequently urged as a proof of guilt. Whoever could be proved to have saved a loyalist from assassination, his house from burning, or his property from plunder, was considered as having influence among the rebels, consequently a rebel commander.'[1]

[1] Gordon, p. 187; see, too, Appendix, p. 85. Gordon relates the exclamation of one of the rebels: 'I thank my God, that no person can prove me guilty of saving the life or property of anyone.'

Bagenal Harvey had acquired the reputation of a very brave man, but he appears now to have been completely unnerved. He was sunk in the deepest dejection, and his demeanour contrasted somewhat remarkably with that of Roche, Keugh, Grogan, and Colclough. The massacre of Scullabogue seems to have broken his heart, and from that time he had little influence, and no hope in the struggle. Like Keugh, and like Bishop Caulfield, too, he appears to have been firmly convinced that a spirit had arisen among the rebels which, if not speedily checked, must turn the movement into a general massacre—a massacre not only of loyalists and Protestants, but also of the most respectable and the most moderate of its leaders.[1] He stated in his defence, that he had accepted the command of the rebellion chiefly in order to prevent it from falling into much more dangerous hands; that he had done his best to keep it within the bounds of humanity; that he had seen with horror the crimes and the fanaticism it had engendered, and that he had always been ready to accede to proposals for restoring order and government. Few things, indeed, can be sadder than the death of a leader, who is conscious in his last moments that the cause for which he dies was a mistaken one, and that its triumph would have been a calamity to his country. Bagenal Harvey was not a wise or a superior man, but he was humane, honourable, and well-meaning, and it is not probable that motives of personal interest or ambition played any great part in shaping his unhappy career.

Courts-martial, followed by immediate executions, were now taking place in many parts of the county. Sixty-five persons were hanged from Wexford Bridge on the charge of either

[1] 'In the local and short-lived insurrection in the county of Wexford, the tendency of affairs was so evident to Bagenal Harvey and other Protestant leaders, that they considered their doom as inevitable, and even some Romish commanders expressed apprehensions. Thus, Esmond Kyan, one of the most brave and generous among them, declared to Richard Dowse, a Protestant gentleman of the county of Wicklow, whom he had rescued from assassins, that his own life was irredeemably forfeited; for if the rebellion should succeed, his own party would murder him; and if it should not succeed, his fate must be death by martial law—which happened, according to his prediction. Even Philip Roche, whose character as a priest might be supposed to insure his safety with his own followers, made a similar declaration to Walter Greene, a Protestant gentleman of the county of Wexford, whose life he had protected.' (Gordon's *History*, pp. 210, 211.)

having taken a leading part in the rebellion, or being concerned in some of the acts of murder that accompanied it;[1] but Dixon, the author of the Wexford massacre, was not among them, for he succeeded in escaping, and was never heard of again. The executions, however, were far less horrible than the indiscriminate burning of houses and slaughter of unarmed men, and even of women, by the troops. They were now everywhere hunting down the rebels, who had dispersed by thousands after the battle of Vinegar Hill and the surrender of Wexford, and who vainly sought a refuge in their cabins. Discipline had almost wholly gone. Military licence was perfectly unrestrained, and the massacres which had taken place—magnified a hundredfold by report—had produced a savage thirst for blood. The rebel historians draw ghastly pictures of the stripped, mutilated, often disembowelled bodies, that lined the roads and lay thick around the burning villages, and they say that long after peace had returned, women and children in Wexford fled, scared as by an evil spirit, at the sight of a British uniform.[2] The sober and temperate colouring of the loyalist historian I have so often quoted, is scarcely less impressive. 'From the commencement of the rebellion,' writes Gordon, 'soldiers, yeomen, and supplementaries, frequently executed without any trial such as they judged worthy of death, even persons found unarmed in their own houses.' 'I have reason to think that more men than fell in battle, were slain in cold blood. No quarter was given to persons taken prisoners as rebels, with or without arms.' 'The devastations and plundering sustained by the loyalists were not the work of the rebels alone. Great part of the damage was committed by the soldiery, who commonly completed the ruin of deserted houses in which they had their quarters, and often plundered without distinction of loyalist and croppy. The Hessians exceeded the other troops in the business of depredation, and many loyalists who had escaped from the rebels were put to death by these foreigners.'[3]

[1] See the list in Musgrave's Appendix, 160. These executions, however, extended over the whole period from June 21, 1798, to Dec. 18, 1800. Gordon states that nine leaders were hanged on June 25; three others on the 28th. Four only of these leaders were Protestants. (Pp. 180–184.)

[2] See Hay, pp. 243, 247, &c.

[3] Gordon, pp. 188, 197, 222. Hay fully agrees with Gordon in giving the first place in these atrocities to the 'Hompesch Dragoons.' (P. 247.) I may mention that, in 1770, Lord

In two respects the conduct of the troops compared very unfavourably with that of the rebels. Though the latter had committed great numbers of atrocious murders, it is acknowledged on all sides that they abstained to a most remarkable degree from outrages on women,[1] while on the other side this usual incident of military licence was terribly frequent. Although, too, it is quite certain that the rebellion assumed in Wexford much of the character of a savage religious war, and that numbers of Protestants were murdered who had given no real cause of offence except their religion, the rebels very rarely directed their animosity against Protestant places of worship. The church of Old Ross was, I believe, the only one that they deliberately burnt, though in the general conflagrations that took place, a few others may have been destroyed or plundered. But there were large districts over which not a Catholic chapel was left standing by the troops, and Archbishop Troy drew up a list of no less than thirty-six that were destroyed in only six counties of Leinster.[2]

Apart, indeed, from the courage which was often displayed on both sides, the Wexford rebellion is a dreary and an ignoble story, with much to blame and very little to admire. It is like a page from the history of the Thirty Years' War, of the suppression of La Vendée, of a Turkish war, or of a war of races in India, though happily its extreme horrors extended only over a small area, and lasted only for a few weeks. Though fanaticism played some part, and revenge a great part, in the terrors of the repression, the remarkable concurrence of both loyal and disloyal writers in attributing the worst excesses to Germans and Welshmen, who had never been mixed up in Irish quarrels, seems to show that mere unchecked military licence was stronger than

Chatham had suggested that, if Ireland was ever invaded by a powerful foreign army, with arms ready to be put into the hands of the Roman Catholics, the task of defending it should be largely entrusted to a subsidised force of German Protestants. (Thackeray's *Life of Chatham*, ii. 222.)

[1] Compare Gordon, pp. 213, 214; Hay, p. 247. Gordon says he has 'not been able to ascertain an instance to the contrary in the county of Wexford, though many beautiful young women were absolutely in the power of the rebels.'

[2] See many statistics about chapel-burning in Madden, i. 349–351. Gordon says that hardly one chapel in the extent of several miles round Gorey escaped burning. (Pp. 199, 200). Bishop Caulfield, in his pamphlet in reply to the misrepresentations of Sir R. Musgrave, said: 'In the extent of nearly fifty miles from Bray to Wexford, almost every Roman Catholic chapel was laid in ashes.' (P. ii.)

either, and there appears to have been little or no difference in point of ferocity between the Irish yeomanry, who were chiefly Protestant, and the Irish militia, who were chiefly Catholic.[1] Such a state of things was only possible by a shameful neglect of duty on the part of commanding officers; and the fact that it was not universal, proves that it was not inevitable. Gordon has left the most emphatic testimony to the excellent discipline and perfect humanity of the Scotch Highlanders, who were commanded by Lord Huntley, and of the Durham Fencible Infantry, who were commanded by Colonel Skerrit, and a few other names are remembered with honour.[2] But in general the military excesses were very shameful, and they did much to rival and much to produce the crimes of the insurgents.

By this time, however, a great change had taken place in the Government of Ireland. We have seen that Lord Camden had long wished to be relieved from his heavy burden, and had represented that in the present dangerous situation of the country the office of Lord Lieutenant and the office of Commander-in-Chief should be united in the person of some skilful and popular general. The Government at last acceded to his wish, and Lord Cornwallis, who, in spite of the disaster of Yorktown, was regarded as the ablest of the English generals in the American war, was induced to accept the double post. He arrived in Dublin on June 20, and his administration opens a new and very memorable page in the history of Ireland.

[1] See the very emphatic statements of Lord Cornwallis. (*Cornwallis Correspondence*, ii. 357, 369.)

[2] Gordon, pp. 197, 198.

CHAPTER XXX.

WHEN Lord Camden resigned the viceroyalty, it was the strong belief of the Government in Ireland that the rebellion was still only in its earlier stages. In Wexford the fire then burnt with undiminished fury, and it was regarded as not only possible, but in a high degree probable, that the prolongation of the struggle in that county, or the appearance of a French expedition on the Irish coast, or a single rebel success, would be sufficient to throw the whole land into flames. The large reinforcements which were at last passing from England to Ireland, and the rapid arming and organisation of the Protestant population, had placed a very formidable force at the disposal of the Government; but the omens all pointed to an extended, desperate, and doubtful civil war, and it was felt that a military governor of great ability and experience was imperatively needed. But in the last days of the Camden administration, the prospect had materially changed. The French had not arrived. It was becoming evident that Ulster was not disposed to rise. The Catholic province of Connaught continued perfectly quiet. In Munster there had been a small rising, in a corner of the county of Cork, but it had not spread, and it was completely put down on June 19, while the means at the disposal of the Government were at last sufficient to give a decisive blow to the rebellion in Wexford. The capture of the rebel camp on Vinegar Hill, and the reconquest of the town of Wexford, took place immediately after the arrival of Lord Cornwallis in Ireland, but the whole merit of them belongs to the previous administration. The rebellion was now broken and almost destroyed, and the task which henceforth lay before the Government was much more that of restoring order and checking crime than of reconquering the country.

The rebels were so discouraged and hopeless, that they would have gladly dispersed if they could have obtained any security for their lives. For some time, indeed, fear or desperation had probably contributed quite as much as any genuine fanaticism to keep them together. 'Their leaders,' wrote Alexander, as early as June 10, 'inflict instant death for disobedience of orders, but notwithstanding numbers wish to desert; but, I think unfortunately, their houses are destroyed, their absence marked, and until it is wise to grant a general amnesty, no individual, irritated as the soldiery are, can with safety leave their main body.'[1] If Lake had accepted the overtures of Father Roche, the chief body of the rebels would have almost certainly gladly laid down their arms; but when they found that their chief did not return, they felt that they must look to their pikes alone for safety.

We have seen that the anxiety of the rebels to place at their head, men whom they recognised as their superiors in education and social position, had more than once triumphed over the difference of creed, but no Protestant, and no Catholic layman, could touch the chords of confidence and fanaticism like their priests. It would, indeed, be a gross injustice to describe the priests as generally in favour of the rebellion. I have already referred to the loyal attitude of some of their bishops, and to the address of the professors at Maynooth, and many humbler priests acted in the same spirit at a time when intimidation from their own flocks and outrages by Protestants made their position peculiarly difficult. Higgins appears to have been very intimate with priests of this kind, and at a time when the anti-popery fanaticism was at its height, he dwelt strongly upon their services. He assured the Ministers, that they would find no means of obtaining arms so efficacious as a promise of pardon proclaimed from the Catholic altars. He reminded them that, when the rebellion was raging, Father Ryan, the parish priest of Clontarf, having first made terms with Beresford and others to secure his people from molestation, exerted himself with such success, that in five days, through his influence, no less than nine carts full of weapons were surrendered. He mentioned that it was through another priest, who officiated at 'Adam and Eve

[1] Alexander to Pelham, June 10, 1798.

Chapel,' that he was enabled to inform the Government of the plot to begin the rebellion by an attack on the two Dublin gaols and a release of the prisoners, and that it was through the same priest that the intended desertion to the rebels of a corps of yeomen at Rathfarnham became known; and he gave a curious description of the system of intimidation, which alone prevented other priests from denouncing secret oaths.[1] In many parts of the country, it is true, great numbers of the lower priests were rebels at heart, but Catholic writers pretend that no parish priest took an open part in the rebellion,[2] and that even in the county of Wexford only about fifteen priests actually appeared with the rebels in the battle-field. They had proved the most successful leaders, but they were now a dwindling body. Father Roche had been hanged off Wexford Bridge. Father Michael Murphy had fallen in the attack on Arklow. Father Kearns had been wounded at Enniscorthy, and though he soon appeared again with the rebels, he was now lying concealed in a farmhouse near Wexford. But Father John Murphy of Boulavogue, who began the rebellion in Wexford, was still with the main body of rebels on the Three Rocks Mountain, and he commanded them in their last serious campaign.

Even after the surrender of Wexford, his force is said to have amounted to 15,000 men, but the desertions were then so rapid and so general, that two days later it had dwindled to 5,000 or 6,000.[3] He probably felt that he had committed himself beyond retreat, and he had always been opposed to surrender,

[1] F. H., Aug. 22, 1798; March 18, 1801. In the former of these letters, Higgins describes an after-dinner conversation with several respectable priests. They deplored that the lower orders were not giving up their arms. Higgins asked why they did not follow Father Ryan's example. They said they had no orders, and they added, that they had at first strongly opposed unlawful oaths, 'but some well-known leaders (which they allowed to be Keogh, McCormick, Byrne, Dease, and Hamill) went round to the several chapels, and informed the priests, if they should in any manner whatever presume to interfere, or to advise, or to admonish the people on political subjects, or against the means of their obtaining their rights, the different committees who collected for the support of their chapels, and for the maintenance of the priests, had so settled that they should not get as much as a single sixpence to support them, and let those who cannot be silent, go to the Government for support. Their having no revenue but the casual collections and charitable donations to exist on, [they] alleged that the threat forced compliance.' (I.S.P.O.)

[2] Dr. Caulfield's *Reply to Sir R. Musgrave*, p. 5.

[3] Byrne's *Memoirs*, i. 204, 206. Byrne was one of the commanders of this expedition, and describes it at length.

but he perceived that in Wexford the rebellion was burnt out and exhausted, and when the arrest of Father Roche placed him at its head, he determined to make a desperate effort to carry it into the almost virgin fields of Carlow and Kilkenny. His army left the Three Rocks early on the morning of the 22nd; crossed the battle-field where Father Roche had fought General Moore two days before, and which was still strewn with unburied corpses and broken carts; traversed an opening called Scollogh Gap, in the range of hills which separates the counties of Wexford and Carlow, and scattered a little loyalist force which attempted to defend a village called Killedmond, on the Carlow side of the boundary. This village was burnt to the ground, either by the rebels or by the troops.[1] The rebels burned every slated house on their march, ostensibly lest it should furnish shelter to the troops, probably really because such houses usually belonged to Protestants and loyalists.

Their immediate object was to reach Castlecomer, a little town in the county of Kilkenny, which is now so sunk in importance that it is not even connected with a railway, and which will probably scarcely be known by name to the majority of my readers. It lies, however, in the heart of one of the very few extensive coal districts in Ireland, and at the close of the eighteenth century it was an important place, and the centre of a large population of colliers.[2] These men had taken part in many disturbances, and Father John believed that they could be readily persuaded to join him.

The expedition had little result, except to bring down ruin and desolation on a peaceful country, and to furnish additional evidence of the hollowness and unreality of the political element in the rebellion. On the 23rd, some Wexford Militia and a troop of dragoon guards attempted to prevent the rebels from crossing the Barrow, but they totally failed, and a considerable body of Wexford Militia were taken prisoners. They were most of them Catholics, and appear to have readily joined the rebels; but seven Protestant prisoners, who were accused of being

[1] Gordon says, by the rebels (p. 165); Byrne says, the troops set fire to the houses; but Father Murphy, to the barracks.

[2] In the *Hibernian Gazetteer* (1789) it is stated, that Lord Castlecomer was said to clear 10,000*l.* a year from the coal-fields on his estate. See, too, Griffith's *Geological and Mining Report of the Leinster Coal District* (1814); and also *Parl. Hist.* xxxiv. 883.

Orangemen, were put to death in cold blood on the accusation, according to one account, by the hands of their former comrades.[1] On the 24th, there was much confused fighting. Castlecomer was plundered. Many houses were burnt. The barracks of Dunain, three miles from Castlecomer, were attacked, but bravely and successfully defended, and then, on the approach of a large force from Kilkenny, under Sir Charles Asgill, the rebels withdrew to the high ground. Not a spark of genuine fanaticism, not a sign of real political feeling, was shown by the population. Many colliers, it is true, joined the rebels, as they would have joined any turbulent or predatory body, and they shared in the plunder of Castlecomer; but almost immediately after, they began to desert, and the more intelligent of the rebels saw plainly that any attempt to advance towards Kilkenny would be madness. 'Nothing,' writes Byrne very bitterly, 'but the certainty that we should be joined by the mass of the population, could have warranted such a proceeding; and to the shame of the people of that country be it said, they preferred to bow in abject slavery, and crouch beneath the tyrant's cruelty, sooner than come boldly to take the field with us.'[2]

The rebels passed the night of the 24th in the Queen's County, but there their reception was equally chilling. 'Seeing not the least disposition on the part of its inhabitants,' says Byrne, 'either to aid or assist us in our present struggle to shake off the cruel English yoke, we began our movement on the 25th to approach as near as we could that day to Scollogh Gap, Mount Leinster, and Blackstairs.'[3] After a weary march, during which they appear to have met with absolutely no sympathy or encouragement,[4] the rebels, exhausted with fatigue, bivouacked late in the evening of the long, sultry day, on Kilcomney[5] Hill, near the pass of Scollogh Gap. That night such of the colliers as had not previously deserted, abandoned them, and they stole a great part of the firearms of their sleeping comrades.[6]

On the 26th, Sir Charles Asgill, at the head of 1,100 men,

[1] Compare Byrne, i. 212; Gordon, p. 166; Cloney's *Personal Narrative*, p. 82; Musgrave, pp. 532, 533. Musgrave says nine prisoners were then put to death, and two others shortly after.

[2] Byrne, ii. 223.

[3] Ibid. p. 224.

[4] Ibid. p. 225; Cloney's *Personal Narrative*, p. 83.

[5] Or Kilconnell.

[6] Byrne, i. 226; Cloney, p. 83.

and supported by a detachment of 500 Queen's County Militia, attacked and defeated the rebels on Kilcomney Hill. General Asgill stated in his official report, though probably with great exaggeration, that the rebels lost more than 1,000 men as well as ten cannon, and that on his own side not more than seven men were killed and wounded. 'Some soldiers,' he adds, 'who were made prisoners the day before, and doomed to suffer death, were fortunately relieved by our troops.'[1] The rebels were not effectually surrounded or pursued, for the great majority of them escaped or fought their way through Scollogh Gap into the county of Wexford, but they appear there to have been completely broken and demoralised, and they speedily dispersed. They had lost their leader, Father John Murphy of Boulavogue. There is some uncertainty about his fate, one account stating that he fell unnoticed early in the battle, another that he was taken by some yeomen and hanged at Tullow.[2] The troops of Sir C. Asgill are accused of having committed horrible excesses at Kilcomney, spreading themselves over the country, plundering and burning numerous houses, and killing in cold blood more than a hundred inoffensive persons who had shown no sympathy with the rebels, many of them being women and children. The account of this massacre is exceedingly circumstantial, and many names are given.[3] Unfortunately there is nothing in the

[1] See Sir Charles Asgill's report to Lord Castlereagh, June 27; *Saunders's Newsletter*, June 28; Madden, iv. 417. Miles Byrne, who took a prominent part in the battle, gives a totally different account of it, describing it as an unsuccessful attempt of Sir C. Asgill to cut off the retreat of the rebels; and declaring that in the fight the soldiers suffered most, though the English general 'preferred a more safe and easy victory; running with his army through the districts adjoining Kilcomney, and, instead of pursuing and fighting with us in the field, murdering in cold blood the unarmed, inoffensive inhabitants, who never left their homes.' He says: 'The hired press of the English ascendency of that day, would have it that we abandoned ten pieces of artillery and quantities of baggage, and had thousands killed and wounded. We had no artillery to abandon never having had any since we left Wexford on June 21; and, as to losses sustained, ours was far less than the enemy's.' (Pp. 228, 229.) I cannot understand where the rebels got their cannon from, and Byrne can hardly have been ignorant of whether there were or were not cannon in his army. On the other hand, Asgill, in his official despatch, expressly says that he took ten cannon, and he cannot have been mistaken. Compare also the account of this battle in Gordon, pp. 168, 169.

[2] Compare Byrne, i. 229, 230; Gordon, p. 185. Cloney, p. 86; Musgrave, p. 544. Musgrave gives an interesting description of the execution of Murphy at Tullow, but says that another priest of the same name fell in the battle.

[3] See the very detailed account in Cloney, pp. 83–86; and compare Byrne, i. 229, and Gordon, p. 168.

conduct of this horrible war to raise any strong presumption against it, though it has probably been told with the usual suppressions and exaggerations. Acts of this kind may be partly explained by the fact that defeated rebels often sought refuge in the neighbouring cottages, and as they wore no uniforms, were undistinguishable from the peasants.[1] That atrocious military licence prevailed, and that great numbers of persons who were not only unarmed, but perfectly innocent, were killed during the struggle, is unfortunately beyond all reasonable doubt, and is fully admitted by the more temperate of the loyalist writers. 'The accounts that you see of the numbers of the enemy destroyed in every action,' writes Lord Cornwallis at this time, 'are, I conclude, greatly exaggerated. From my own knowledge of military affairs, I am sure that a very small proportion of them only, could be killed in battle, and I am much afraid that any man in a brown coat who is found within several miles of the field of action is butchered without discrimination.'[2]

The reader will remember that the rebel army, after the surrender of Wexford, had divided into two parts. We have followed the fortunes of the larger one, which was commanded by Father John Murphy. The fortunes of the smaller one may be soon told.

The town of Gorey had passed through several vicissitudes in the course of the rebellion. The refugees who had fled from it to Arklow, returned to their homes on June 20, while the battle on Vinegar Hill was taking place. A large part of the rebel army in that battle had come from the neighbourhood of Gorey, and when the rebels were defeated, and in a great measure dispersed to their homes, a small party of seventeen Gorey yeomanry cavalry 'had the courage and temerity to scour the country in search of rebels, with the assistance of some others who had joined them, and killed about fifty men, whom they found in their houses or straggling homeward from the rebel army.' This act was followed by a speedy and terrible retribution. A party of 500 rebels, including some of the kinsmen of those who had been massacred, and under the command of a gentle-

[1] See, on the indiscriminate slaughter often due to this cause, the *Narrative of what passed at Killala*, pp. 125, 126.

[2] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, ii. 355.

man named Perry, heard of the slaughter and of the weakness of the party that perpetrated it, and they at once proceeded to Gorey, determined to avenge it. The refugees who had so lately returned from Arklow endeavoured to escape there again; the yeomanry, numbering, between infantry and cavalry, thirty-one men, tried to cover their flight, and killed seven of the rebels, but they soon found that they were on the point of being surrounded, and they then broke and fled. The sequel of the story may be told by Gordon. 'The refugees,' he says, 'were slaughtered along the road to the number of thirty-seven men, besides a few who were left for dead, but afterwards recovered. No women or children were injured, because the rebels, who professed to act on a plan of retaliation, found on inquiry that no women or children of their party had been hurt.' The day on which the tragedy took place was long remembered in Wexford as 'Bloody Friday.'[1]

The party which attacked Gorey was detached from a larger body, who now succeeded in penetrating into Wicklow, and were joined by some rebels who had risen in that county. They were commanded by men of higher social position than we usually find in the rebellion. Anthony Perry, Esmond Kyan, Edward Fitzgerald, and Garret and William Byrne, were all either landed gentry, or belonged to the families of landed gentry, in the counties of Wexford and Wicklow, and some of them enjoyed a high reputation for integrity and benevolence.[2] On the morning of June 25 they attacked Hacketstown, which lies within the borders of the county of Carlow, and which had already been unsuccessfully attacked on May 25. A small force of yeomanry and militia, amounting probably to less than 200 men, and commanded by Captain Hardy and Lieutenant Gardiner, defended it, and met the rebels outside the town, but they soon found them-

[1] Gordon, pp. 156–158; Appendix, p. 90. Musgrave prints an affidavit truly describing this as a massacre of unarmed Protestants; but, as Gordon justly says, 'we are not informed in this affidavit that a considerable number of Romanists had that day been put to death in and about Gorey, some of whom were kinsmen of those who were most active afterwards in this massacre of the Protestants.'

[2] The reader may find several interesting particulars about these men, drawn from different sources, in Crofton Croker's notes to Holt's *Memoirs*, i. 54–61. Perry, according to Gordon, had had his hair cut away and its roots burned by 'Tom the devil'—the well-known sergeant of the North Cork Militia—and his property was destroyed by the yeomen. He then threw himself into the arms of the rebels. He was a Protestant; the others were Catholics.

selves in imminent danger of being surrounded. Captain Hardy and a few men were killed, and the troops retreated and took up a strong position in the barracks. 'The most obstinate and bloody contest,' wrote Lieutenant Gardiner, 'took place that has happened since the commencement of the present rebellion. We fought in the midst of flames (for the town was set on fire), upwards of nine hours.' The barracks, and the neighbouring house of a clergyman named McGhee, were defended with great heroism. The assailants, who had no artillery, were at last beaten back. On the loyalist side eleven men were killed and twenty wounded. On the rebel side the loss was far greater, but Lieutenant Gardiner said that it was impossible to calculate it with accuracy, as the rebels threw many bodies into the flames, and carried off about thirty carloads of killed and wounded. With the exception of the barracks and two other houses, the whole town was consumed; its inhabitants were reduced to the extremity of destitution, and the garrison fell back upon Tullow.[1]

The rebels next attempted, on June 30, to take Carnew, but they were foiled by the despatch of a considerable force of cavalry and infantry from Gorey. The infantry were recalled, and about two hundred cavalry, chiefly regulars but partly yeomen, were sent to pursue the rebels, who succeeded, however, in drawing them into an ambuscade, and put them to flight with the loss of fifty or sixty men. It is said that not a single insurgent fell. Among the killed were many of the Ancient Britons.[2] On July 2, another bloody affair took place on Ballyraheen Hill, between Carnew and Tinnehely. A hundred and fifty yeomen tried to dislodge a much larger body of rebels from the height, but a charge of pikemen down the hill scattered them with the loss of two officers and many privates. The soldiers then rallied in a house near the foot of the hill, which their assailants during the whole night vainly tried to burn. The conflagration of a neighbouring house by the rebels proved of great use to the

[1] See Lieutenant Gardiner's despatch, June 26 (I.S.P.O.), and the accounts in Gordon, Hay, and Musgrave.

[2] The different accounts of this affair (which was called the battle of Ballyellis), have been brought together by Crofton Croker in his notes to Holt's *Memoirs*, the only really well-edited book relating to the rebellion (i. 78–86). Holt greatly magnifies the number of the soldiers, and pretends that 370 of them were slain.

beleaguered yeomen, who were enabled in the clear light to fire with deadly effect from the windows, and who are said to have left more than a hundred men dead on the field.[1] One portion of the rebels then made their way through the Wicklow mountains, into the county of Kildare, where the rebellion had never wholly ceased, and where among the hills and bogs it still continued for some weeks, in the form of a predatory guerilla war, under the leadership of William Aylmer. It had, however, but little importance, for the rebels soon found that the people were not with them, and were sometimes even actively against them, and very few recruits joined them. A loyal man named Johnston, who had been taken prisoner by them, and who afterwards either escaped or was released, reported to the Government that the Kildare rebels were utterly dispirited, and perfectly ready to disband if they could obtain a pardon.[2] Another party of Wexford rebels returned to their own county, where they were soon hunted down, shot, or dispersed. Among the Wicklow hills, however, a large Protestant farmer named Joseph Holt, who was evidently a man of considerable ability and courage, and who had chiefly managed the successful ambuscade on June 30, kept together many rebels, and for a long time made plundering excursions into the surrounding country.

The misery produced by these operations is by no means to be measured by the loss of life in the field. Numbers of unarmed peasants were hunted down because they were, or were believed to be, rebel fugitives, or because they had given shelter to rebels. Numbers of peaceful Protestants were murdered as Orangemen, or as oppressors, or as loyalists. The blood passion, which will be satisfied with nothing short of extermination, was roused in multitudes, and it was all the more fierce because it was on both sides largely mixed with fear. Over great districts nearly every house was burnt, the poorer cabins by the troops as the homes of rebels, the slated houses by the rebels as the homes of Protestants or loyalists. Agriculture had ceased. Its implements were destroyed. The sheep and cattle had been plundered and slaughtered. The farmers were homeless, ruined, and often starving. Misgovernment and corruption, political agitation and political conspiracy, had done their work, and a great part

[1] Gordon, pp. 174, 175; Hay, pp. 261, 262. The number of killed and wounded is very variously stated.

[2] Cooke to Wickham, July 17, 1798 (Record Office).

of Ireland was as miserable and as desolate as any spot upon the globe.

Lord Cornwallis was much shocked at the state of feeling and society he found around him, and in some respects his judgment of it was not altogether just. Arriving at a time when the rebellion had received its deathblow, he certainly underrated the efficiency of the yeomanry and militia, who, in spite of their great want of discipline, had virtually saved the country, and had shown in these last weeks qualities of courage, vigilance, and energy which Camden and Castlereagh abundantly recognised. It was difficult to exaggerate, though it was easy to explain, the ferocity that prevailed, but a governor who came as a perfect stranger to Ireland and to its passions, hardly made sufficient allowance for the inevitable effect of the long-continued tension and panic, arising from such a succession and alternation of horrors as I have described. He spoke with indignation of the prevalent folly 'of substituting the word Catholicism, instead of Jacobinism, as the foundation of the present rebellion.' 'The violence of our friends,' he said, 'and their folly in endeavouring to make it a religious war, added to the ferocity of our troops, who delight in murder, most powerfully counteract all plans of conciliation.' 'The minds of people are now in such a state that nothing but blood will satisfy them; and although they will not admit the term, their conversation and conduct point to no other mode of concluding this unhappy business, than that of extirpation.' 'The conversation even at my table, where you will suppose I do all I can to prevent it, always turns on hanging, shooting, burning, &c. &c., and if a priest has been put to death, the greatest joy is expressed by the whole company. So much for Ireland and my wretched situation.' 'The life of a Lord Lieutenant of Ireland comes up to my idea of perfect misery; but if I can accomplish the great object of consolidating the British Empire, I shall be sufficiently repaid.'[1]

These last lines, which were written as early as July 1, probably point to a design which was already formed of pushing forward a legislative union. It must be remarked, that in dilating upon the sanguinary violence of the principal persons in Ireland, Lord Cornwallis always made one eminent exception. In

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, ii. 355–357, 369, 372.

several passages he speaks of the conspicuous moderation and humanity of Lord Clare, 'whose character,' he says, 'has been much misrepresented in England.' 'Almost all the other principal political characters here are absurdly violent.' 'The Chancellor, notwithstanding all that is said of him, is by far the most moderate and right-headed man among us.'[1]

It is necessary to take such passages into account if we would form a just judgment of this remarkable man, who played so great a part in Irish history during the last twelve years of the eighteenth century. The persistence with which Lord Clare maintained the system of parliamentary corruption, and his steady opposition to all concession of political power to the Catholics, appear to me to have done very much to produce the rebellion. But, unlike many of those who co-operated with him, his conduct on these subjects was not due to personal corruption or selfishness, but to strong and definite political conviction. He upheld the system of corruption, because he was convinced that Ireland with a separate Parliament could only remain a part of the British Empire so long as that Parliament was maintained in complete and permanent subservience to the Executive in England. He opposed the admission of Catholics to power, because he entirely disbelieved in the possible amalgamation of the Protestant and Catholic nations in Ireland; because he predicted that if the policy of concession were adopted, the overwhelming numerical preponderance of Catholics would ultimately make them omnipotent, and because he saw in that omnipotence the destruction of the Protestant Establishment in Church and State, and ultimately of the Protestant ownership of land. When, contrary to his wishes, the Catholic franchise was conceded in 1793, he was convinced that a legislative union had become the only means of saving the Church, and property, and the connection; and he opposed the completion of Catholic emancipation, and contributed powerfully to the fatal measure of the recall of Lord Fitzwilliam. His own policy on the one side, and the French Revolution, French intrigues, and United Irish conspiracies on the other, soon drew Ireland into the vortex of revolution, and Clare then steadily supported the measures of military repression. He supported, or at least fully

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, ii. 362, 371.

acquiesced in, not only laws of great though probably necessary severity, but also acts that were plainly beyond the law: the illegal deportations, the burning of houses, the systematic floggings of suspected persons in order to discover arms or elicit confessions. He declared that it was the rigour of martial law that had saved Ulster, and in after years he did not flinch from defending its excesses, even in the uncongenial atmosphere of the English House of Lords. Wilberforce mentions how he had once been present with Pitt in that House, when speeches were made charging the authorities in Ireland with having employed practices of the nature of torture to discover arms, and Clare at once rose to justify their conduct. 'I shall never,' Wilberforce adds, 'forget Pitt's look. He turned round to me, with that high indignant stare which sometimes marked his countenance, and stalked out of the House.'[1] But in all this, Clare acted upon the calculations of a definite policy, upon the persuasion that such means were indispensable to the security of the country. He was arrogant and domineering; he delighted in insulting language and in despotic measures, and he had a supreme contempt for the majority of his fellow-countrymen, but he was wholly free from the taint of personal cruelty, and he was too brave and too strong to be blinded or swayed by the passions of the hour.[2]

Something had been done in the closing days of Lord Camden to mitigate, at least in some parts of Ireland, the severities of martial law,[3] and with the full assent of Clare, Cornwallis at last,

[1] *Life of Wilberforce*, ii. 327.

[2] In a privately printed book, called *Essays by an Octogenarian* (1851), by a gentleman named Roche, there are some interesting remarks about Lord Clare, based on personal knowledge. The writer says: 'I could state many redeeming instances of persons, whose legal guilt could not be gainsaid, saved by him from the lash and halter, and not a few, I have the happiness to know, through the intercession of my own family. . . . In private life, moreover, I can affirm that he was a generous and indulgent landlord, a kind master, and an attached friend' (ii. 114, 115). He mentions (p. 351) that, like Lord Thurlow, he was extremely addicted to profane swearing.

[3] Lady Louisa Conolly wrote from the county of Kildare, just before the return of Camden to England: 'The free quarters, whipping the people, and burning the houses, have just been stopped, which rejoices me, for although in some places, where these terrible sentences were executed with great caution by humane and deserving officers, the object did answer for discovering the pikes and arms, yet, upon the whole, it was a dangerous measure, in regard to the licentiousness it produced among the soldiers, the fury and madness it drove the insurgents to, and the lukewarmness that it threw upon the well-disposed persons, who found themselves equally aggrieved by the free quarters as the rebels are. So that it

though somewhat tardily, adopted a more decided policy of clemency. On July 3, a proclamation was inserted in the 'Dublin Gazette' authorising the King's generals to give protections to such insurgents as, having been guilty simply of rebellion, surrendered their arms, deserted their leaders, and took the oath of allegiance;[1] on the 17th a message from the Lord Lieutenant was delivered to the House of Commons signifying his Majesty's pleasure to that effect, and an Act of amnesty was speedily carried in favour of all rebels, with some specified exceptions, who complied with these conditions.[2] It was difficult in a country where complete anarchy had long prevailed, and where violent crime was still appallingly common, to obtain any semblance of respect for law, and it was necessary sometimes to punish severely, loyalists who disregarded the protections of the generals; but slowly and imperfectly confidence was restored.

In the course of a few weeks, most of the remaining leaders were either taken, or surrendered. Father Kearns was tried and hanged at Edenderry. He appears to have shown much ferocity during the rebellion, and to have fully deserved his fate, which he met with sullen silence. It is stated that, four years before, at Paris, during the ascendency of Robespierre, he had been seized as a priest and hanged from a lamp post, but his huge weight so bent the iron, that his feet touched the ground and he was rescued, and succeeded in escaping to Ireland. Anthony Perry was executed at the same time and place. I have already related the intolerable brutality that turned him into a rebel, and Gordon has borne an emphatic testimony to his efforts to restrain the excesses of his followers, but it is probable that the part he took in the retaliatory massacre at Gorey on Bloody Friday, placed him beyond the clemency of the Government. Another leader whose fate excited much sympathy was Esmond Kyan, who had commanded the rebel artillery in the battle of Arklow. He is described by an intensely loyalist historian[3] as 'liberal, generous, brave, and merciful,' and he appears to have acted with uniform humanity, and to have saved many lives. His own would almost certainly have been spared, if there had been any

is a blessing we have it all stopped.' (Lady L. Conolly to the Duke of Richmond, June 18, 1798. *Bunbury MSS.*)

[1] Plowden, ii. 773.

[2] Ibid. 782–784; 38 Geo. III. c. 55

[3] Taylor.

time for an appeal, but his capture, trial, and execution were all compressed into a few hours. He had a cork arm, which was shot off at Arklow, and it is said to have been brought against him as evidence in his trial.[1]

Kyan was at least a leader of the rebels, but there was one execution which Gordon has indignantly denounced as a gross miscarriage of justice. It was that of Father John Redmond, who was priest in the parish of Clough, of which Gordon was for twenty-three years curate. Of his rebellious conduct, Gordon says he could find no other proof than the sentence which consigned him to death, and he declares that on the one occasion on which Father Redmond was seen with a body of rebels, his sole object was to protect the house of Lord Mountnorris from plunder; that he was so far from sympathising with the rebellion, that he was actually obliged to conceal himself in Protestant houses when the rebels were in possession of the country, and that he was continually denounced by his co-religionists as a traitor to their cause. He appears to have been treated with gross brutality even before his trial, and it is a touching and characteristic fact, that it is the pen of the Protestant clergyman of his parish that has chiefly vindicated his memory.[2]

In several cases, however, more leniency was shown. Edward Fitzgerald, a gentleman of considerable position in his county, who had been a leader of the rebels from the day when he had been sent with Colclough from Wexford to make terms with them, surrendered on a promise that his life should be spared. After his surrender he had some conversation with Cooke on the course which the rebellion in Wexford had taken, and he told him 'that at first his men fought well, but latterly would not stand at all; that he and the other leaders had but little command; that the mob were furious, and wanting to massacre every Protestant, and that the only means they had of dissuading them from burning houses, was that they were destroying their own property.'[3] He underwent a period of imprisonment, and was afterwards banished to the Continent, as well as several other conspicuous rebels, among whom were Garret Byrne, and Aylmer,

[1] *Faulkner's Journal*, Aug. 11, 1798. See, too, various facts relating to these rebels, collected by Crofton Croker in Holt's *Memoirs*, i. 57–61; in Byrne's *Memoirs*, i. 300, 301; and in Madden's *United Irishmen*.

[2] Gordon, pp. 185, 186.

[3] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, ii. 370.

the leader in Kildare. Fitzgerald, Byrne, and Aylmer agreed, on surrendering, to use their influence with their followers to induce them to give up their arms and return to their allegiance, and the Government fully recognised the good faith with which they executed their promise. Cooke had interviews with most of these men, and he described Aylmer, the Kildare leader, as apparently 'a silly, ignorant, obstinate lad.'[1] He had probably higher qualities than Cooke perceived, for he became a distinguished officer in the Austrian service. He commanded the escort which accompanied Marie Louise from Paris to Vienna in 1814, and he is said in the same year to have visited London in the suite of the Emperor of Austria. He afterwards resigned his commission in the Austrian service, became colonel under his countryman and fellow-rebel, General Devereux, in the service of Bolivar, and received a wound which proved fatal, at the battle of Rio de la Hache.[2]

Two men who surrendered on protection, were nevertheless tried and hanged for murder. One of them was William Byrne, the brother of Garret Byrne,[3] and the other was William Devereux, who was condemned for having taken part in the massacre of Scullabogue.[4] Edward Roche, having surrendered on condition of being transported, was tried for complicity in the massacre on Wexford Bridge; but as it was proved that he had taken no part in it, and had done much to terminate it, he was acquitted.

General Hunter, who was sent down to the county of Wexford instead of Lake, appears to have discharged a difficult duty with humanity and skill, and the writers who have most condemned the conduct of the courts-martial in Wexford, have made an exception in favour of those which were presided over by Lord Ancram and by Colonel Fowlis.[5] A great improvement was introduced into this department, by the order of Lord Cornwallis that no sentence of court-martial should be carried into effect before the evidence had been transmitted to Dublin for the inspection of the Government.

[1] Cooke to Wickham, July 21, 1798 (R.O.).

[2] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, ii. 366; Madden, iv. 562.

[3] See the loyalist version of the proceedings of William Byrne in Musgrave, pp. 515, 524; Taylor, p. 159; and the rebel version in Byrne's *Memoirs*, i. 156–158; 323, 324.

[4] Hay very emphatically asserts the innocence of Devereux (pp. 285, 286).

[5] Hay, pp. 270, 275, 281.

There were prisoners in Dublin whose guilt was in reality of a far deeper dye than that of most of the Wexford leaders, and a high commission, presided over by Chief Justice Carleton, was appointed to try them. The first trial was that of John and Henry Sheares. They were arraigned on July 4, but the trial was postponed till the 12th. The evidence of Captain Armstrong was clear and conclusive, and there could be no rational doubt of the guilt of the prisoners. It is certain that they were on the Executive Directory of the United Irish conspiracy; that at the time they were arrested, they were busily preparing an immediate insurrection; that they were engaged up to the very last moment in attempting to seduce the soldiers of the King; and that, although the elder brother was a far more insignificant person than the younger one, the two brothers acted together in political matters with the most perfect mutual confidence. The savage proclamation against giving quarter to resisting Irishmen, which was intended to be issued immediately after the insurrection had broken out, was in the handwriting of John Sheares, and appears to have been in the possession of the elder brother; and the two brothers had already enjoyed the clemency of the Government, who had mercifully abstained, at their petition, from prosecuting a seditious Cork paper with which they were concerned.[1] The only point in the case on which there was the smallest real doubt, was whether Henry Sheares was acquainted with the proclamation drawn up by his younger brother. It is probable that he was, but, even if the prosecution was on this point mistaken, it could not alter the substantial merits of the case.

The trial, according to the evil fashion which was then common both in England and Ireland,[2] was protracted far into the night. The prisoners were defended with great ability by Curran, Ponsonby, Plunket, and McNally. Several technical points were raised and overruled. Great efforts were made to excite religious prejudice against Armstrong, who was reported to have expressed sympathy with the theological views of Paine.

[1] Madden, iv. 231. In the I.S.P.O. there is a letter from Henry Sheares, from Cork, dated Sept. 12, 1797, proposing to the Government that Mr. O'Driscoll should put an end to the publication of the *Cork Gazette*, on condition that an impending prosecution was abandoned, and it is noted that the Government accepted the proposal.

[2] See Stephen's *History of Criminal Law*, i. 422.

Much was said of the danger of the Irish law of treason, which made the evidence of a single witness sufficient, and all the resources of rhetoric, mingled with not a little misrepresentation, were employed to aggravate the baseness of the conduct by which Armstrong obtained his knowledge. I have already described his conduct, the motives that appear to have governed it, the advice under which he acted, the emphatic approval of his brother officers. His memory has ever since been pursued with untiring hatred, by writers who would probably have extolled him as a hero if he had listened to the seduction of the Sheares's, and betrayed the camp into rebel hands—by writers who have not found one word of honest indignation to condemn the conduct of Esmonde at Prosperous, perhaps the basest of the many acts of treachery in the rebellion. There can, however, be no doubt of the truth of the evidence of Armstrong, or of the importance of his services; and the Corporation of Dublin, being of opinion that he had saved the city from a massacre, voted him its freedom.[1]

The prominent position of the family of the Sheares's, and the eloquence of their defenders, contributed to throw some deceptive halo around these two very commonplace conspirators, who were executed after a fair trial and on clear evidence. The best that can be said of them is, that they took a far smaller part in organising the rebellion than others who were suffered to escape because the evidence that could be produced against them was not equally clear. Though they had long been engaged in treason, they do not appear to have been in the confidence of the old Directory, and it would not be just to ascribe to that body any complicity in the intended proclamation.

Like most conspirators, they were men of broken fortune, and overwhelmed with debt. They had sometimes been obliged to fly from Dublin from their creditors, and it is remarkable that one of the principal and most exacting of these was Dixon, who was prominent among the leaders of the conspiracy.[2] Their

[1] *Faulkner's Journal*, July 24, 1798.

[2] McNally wrote immediately after the arrest: 'Very few, I find, had a knowledge, or even an idea, that the Sheares were implicated as reported. The purport of the manifesto or proclamation said to be found on them, has astonished many who would have gone great lengths on the known principles of emancipation and reform, as well as

execution was appointed for the very day after their condemnation, but great efforts were made to save them, and they themselves implored mercy, and offered to make discoveries. Cornwallis, however, refused their petition, and in the face of death, the courage which had supported them through their trial, appears to have wholly broken down.[1] Henry Sheares, indeed, was as far as possible from the stuff of which successful rebels are made, and he showed in the last scene of his life an abject and pitiable cowardice. John Sheares was of another stamp, and his enduring affection for his brother, and his extreme desire to save him, form the best feature in his character.

They were hanged on July 14, and buried beneath the church of St. Michan, where, owing to some strange antiseptic property of soil or atmosphere, their bodies were seen long years after, dry and shrivelled, but undecayed. Two letters, which John Sheares wrote to his favourite sister on the night before his execution, have been often printed and admired. They are, indeed, singularly curious and characteristic. Written in all the inflated, rhetorical strain of sentiment, which the 'Nouvelle Héloïse' had made popular, they show clearly how completely the

independency, but who shudder at the thought of execution. I doubt very much if they had any confidential communication with Bond, Jackson, and Dixon. This I know, the two latter always spoke of them with great bitterness, owing to some money transactions; and Dixon had an execution against them, and sued them on it with great rigour.' (J. W., May 23, 1798.) In a letter written Dec. 25, 1796, J. W. mentions that the Sheares's had been driven out of Dublin by debt, and adds: 'They have touched citizens B. B. Harvey and Dixon for a few hundreds.'

[1] Beresford writes: 'They conducted themselves with great decency on the trial, and with firmness, particularly the younger; . . . but this day, when they found no chance, their courage failed them, and I hear they sent offers of discoveries to Lord Cornwallis. . . . At the gallows, they both lost their spirits, and the younger, I hear, fell into fits.' (*Beresford Correspondence*, ii. 157, 158.) Alexander Knox says: 'When the Sheares sent to entreat for mercy, it was I who conveyed the message from the Ordinary of Newgate, and I was present at the consequent conversation between Lord Castlereagh and the Attorney-General.' (Knox's *Remains*, iv. 32.) Alexander, writing to Pelham, says: 'The Sheares died like poltroons; McCann and Byrne, the first with a firm and manly courage, the other . . . with a constitutional indifference.' (Alexander to Pelham, July 26, 1798 *Pelham MSS.*) Barrington has printed a piteous letter from Henry Sheares, imploring him to entreat the Chancellor in his favour, and Lord Clare seems to have, for a time, wished to respite him. Madden pretends that John Sheares showed courage to the end. See the accounts he has brought together (iv. 312, 313, 323–25). See, too, a curious anecdote in Mr. Fitzpatrick's *Sham Squire*, pp. 190–192, and also the contemporary account from a Cork newspaper in Reynolds's *Life*, ii. 210.

writer, like so many of the young enthusiasts of his time, had been dominated and moulded by the genius of Rousseau; and they show not less clearly how true is the saying of a great French poet, that affectation is often the thing that clings to us the last, even in the face of death. It may be added, that two brothers of the Sheares's had fallen in the service of the King, and it is a singular fact, that the Act for the regulation of trials in cases of felony and treason, under which they were tried, had been introduced many years before, into the Irish Parliament by their own father.[1] He had been one of the most respected men of his time, and Lord Carleton, who tried and sentenced his sons, had been his intimate friend.

The trials of John McCann, Michael Byrne, and Oliver Bond speedily followed. The Government were extremely anxious to bring before the public incontestable evidence of the existence of a treasonable and republican conspiracy connected with France, in order to silence those who still represented the rebellion as aiming at nothing more than Catholic emancipation and parliamentary reform, or as merely due to the severities of martial law. Most ample and most conclusive evidence of this kind was in their hands, but it consisted chiefly of documents from France which could not be disclosed, and of the secret information of men who could be induced by no earthly consideration to appear in the witness-box. Thomas Reynolds, however, had by this time discovered that it was impossible for him to remain in a neutral or semi-neutral position, and after the attempt to assassinate him, and after his arrest as a United Irishman, on the information of United Irishmen, he turned savagely at bay, and placed the whole of his knowledge at the full service of the Government. The prisoners had been his colleagues on the Leinster Committee, and in the three trials I have mentioned, the case for the prosecution rested mainly on his evidence, corroborated by the papers found in Bond's house. This evidence, if it was believed, was abundantly conclusive, and it was entirely

[1] *Commons Journals*, Jan. 31, 1766. See, too, *Faulkner's Journal*, July 31, 1798. Some, at least, of the prisoners tried by the special commission, might never have been convicted, if Ireland had not obtained her legislative independence. In consequence of that independence, the English Act of William III., making two witnesses necessary in cases of treason, was not in operation in Ireland, and it had never been adopted by the Irish Parliament.

unshaken by cross-examination. McCann had acted as secretary at the meeting at Bond's house. Byrne had been the delegate from Wicklow, and the most active organiser in that county. Bond's house had been the headquarters of the conspiracy, and he had taken a leading part in it in every stage. The utmost efforts were made to blacken the character of Reynolds and to prove him unworthy of belief, but they had no effect on the minds either of the judges or of the juries. The three prisoners were found guilty and condemned to death, and in no single case were the juries before delivering their verdict absent from the jury box for more than a few minutes.[1]

McCann was hanged on July 19. Byrne and Bond lay under sentence of death, when a proposal was made by the other prisoners who had been arrested with them, and who were lying in the prisons of Dublin, to make a full disclosure and confession of their conspiracy, and to submit to banishment for life to any country at amity with the King, provided their lives were spared as well as those of Byrne and Bond. The negotiation was begun through the instrumentality of Dobbs—a benevolent and eccentric member of the Irish Parliament, who has more than once appeared in the course of this history—and sixty-four leading United Irishmen concurred in the application.

The Government were much perplexed. The application

[1] Howell's *State Trials*, vol. xxvii. Castlereagh afterwards recommended Reynolds to the English Government as a man 'of respectable family and good character' (Castlereagh to Wickham, Nov. 16, 1798, R.O.); and many years later he wrote to Reynolds: 'The situation I held in Ireland during the rebellion best enabled me to judge of the motives which influenced your conduct; and I shall always feel it an act of mere justice to you to state, that your protecting assistance was afforded to the State long before you were known to any member of the Government; that it was afforded in the most useful manner, when the prevention of calamity could be your only motive for making the important communications received from you; that they were made without a suggestion of personal advantage to yourself; and, . . . had it not been for accidental circumstances, . . . his Majesty's Government in that country might have remained to this day in ignorance of everything relating to you, but of the truly important services you were enabled to render to your country.' (Reynolds's *Life*, i. 447.) Lord Carleton wrote to Reynolds: 'From the opportunities which were afforded to me in 1798, for forming a judgment of your character and conduct, in assisting his Majesty's Government towards putting down the dangerous rebellion which took place at that period, I formed a judgment that in the whole of your conduct, and in the communications which were carried on on your part with the Government, and in the evidence which you gave upon the prosecutions of the rebels, you had behaved with consistency, integrity, honour, ability, and disinterestedness.' (Ibid. ii. 100.)

was made on the night of July 24; the execution of Byrne was appointed for the 25th and that of Bond for the 26th, and Lord Clare, on whom Cornwallis chiefly relied, had gone to his country house in the county of Limerick. Cornwallis was inclined to accept the proposal, and Lord Castlereagh appears to have agreed with him. They considered 'the establishment of the traitorous conspiracy, by the strong testimony of all the principal actors in it,' to be a matter of the very first political importance. They believed that there were scarcely any of the prisoners, except Neilson, whose conviction was certain, and they were sincerely anxious to stop the effusion of blood. On the other hand, Cornwallis wrote that he doubted whether it would be possible to find a third man in the administration who would agree with them, and he added, 'the minds of people are now in such a state, that nothing but blood will satisfy them.'[1]

He assembled hastily his chief legal advisers, and among them there were certainly some who were very free from all taint of inhumanity. 'Lord Carleton,' Cornwallis wrote to Portland, 'who might in any country be considered as a cool and temperate man, gave his opinion in the most decided manner against listening to the proposal, and declared that it would have such an effect on the public mind, that he did not believe, if Byrne and Oliver Bond were not executed, that it would be possible to get a jury to condemn another man for high treason. He said that several of those who signed the papers, and particularly Dr. McNevin, might possibly be convicted, and that others might be liable to pains and penalties, by proceedings against them in Parliament, and in short he gave his opinion against the measure in the strongest and most decided terms, and Lord Kilwarden and the Attorney-General spoke to the same effect.'[2] In accordance with this opinion, Byrne was executed.

It is impossible to deny, that an extremely sanguinary spirit had at this time been aroused among the Protestants of Dublin and of the counties which had been desolated by the rebellion. It is a spirit which, in all times and races and countries, has fol-

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, ii. 370–372, 374.
[2] Ibid. p. 372.

lowed such scenes of carnage as I have described. In the mild atmosphere of the nineteenth century, and in the recollection of many who are still alive, a very similar spirit was kindled among the English population of India by sepoy cruelties, which were scarcely more horrible, and were certainly less numerous, than those of the Irish rebellion of 1798. I cannot, however, regard the strong feeling which was shown against sparing the lives of the chief authors, organisers, and promoters of that rebellion, as merely an evidence of this sanguinary disposition. No one who has any adequate sense of the enormous mass of suffering which the authors of a rebellion let loose upon their country, will speak lightly of their crime, or of the importance of penalties that may deter others from following in their steps. Misplaced leniency is often the worst of cruelties, especially in a country where the elements of turbulence are very rife; where the path of sedition has an irresistible fascination to a large class of adventurous natures; where a false, sickly sentiment, throws its glamour over the most commonplace and even the most contemptible of rebels.

In the great lottery of civil war the prizes are enormous, and when such prizes may be obtained by a course of action which is profoundly injurious to the State, the deterrent influence of severe penalties is especially necessary. In the immense majority of cases, the broad distinction which it is now the fashion to draw between political and other crimes, is both pernicious and untrue. There is no sphere in which the worst passions of human nature may operate more easily or more dangerously than in the sphere of politics. There is no criminal of a deeper dye than the adventurer who is gambling for power with the lives of men. There are no crimes which produce vaster and more enduring sufferings than those which sap the great pillars of order in the State, and destroy that respect for life, for property, and for law, on which all true progress depends. So far the rebellion had been not only severely, but mercilessly suppressed. Scores of wretched peasants, who were much more deserving of pity than of blame, had been shot down. Over great tracts of country every rebel's cottage had been burnt to cinders. Men had been hanged who, although they had been compelled or induced to take a leading part in

the rebellion, had comported themselves in such a manner that they had established the strongest claims to the clemency of the Government. But what inconsistency and injustice, it was asked, could be more flagrant, than at this time to select as special objects of that clemency, the very men who were the authors and the organisers of the rebellion—the very men who, if it had succeeded, would have reaped its greatest rewards?

It is true that these men had not desired such a rebellion as had taken place, and that some of them, like Thomas Emmet, were personally humane, well-meaning, and unselfish. But it was scarcely possible to exaggerate the evil they had produced, and they were immeasurably more guilty than the majority of those who had already perished. They had thrown back, probably for generations, the civilisation of their country. They had been year by year engaged in sowing the seed which had ripened into the harvest of blood. They had done all in their power to bring down upon Ireland the two greatest curses that can afflict a nation—the curse of civil war, and the curse of foreign invasion; and although at the outset of their movement they had hoped to unite Irishmen of all creeds, they had ended by lashing the Catholics into frenzy by deliberate and skilful falsehood. The assertion that the Orangemen had sworn to exterminate the Catholics, was nowhere more prominent than in the newspaper which was the recognised organ of the United Irish leaders. The men who had spread this calumny through an ignorant and excitable Catholic population, were assuredly not less truly murderers than those who had fired the barn of Scullabogue or piked the Protestants on Wexford Bridge.

Such arguments were very serious, and they at first prevailed. After the execution of Byrne, however, a second application was made to the Government. It was signed by no less than seventy-eight prisoners, and it included the names of several leading conspirators, especially Arthur O'Connor, who had refused to take part in the previous overture. Henry Alexander, who was related to Bond, had interviews with him and with Neilson, and he brought back hopes of great revelations.[1] In spite of the

[1] He describes Bond as having shown admirable courage 'He desired me to state, that he would not move out of the ranks to save his own life (this was within a few hours of his execution), but that he would act with those men now State prisoners; . . . and he added, that they

violent opposition of the Speaker and of Sir John Parnell, and of the general sentiment of Dublin, the offer was accepted. Lord Clare threw his great influence strongly on the side of clemency,[1] and immediately after his arrival in Dublin, he, in company with Lord Castlereagh, had an interview with Emmet, McNevin, and O'Connor. The three United Irishmen agreed to give the fullest information of every part of the treason, both foreign and domestic, though they declined to criminate individuals or disclose names. They at once frankly acknowledged their conspiracy with the French, though they declared that they had never been prepared to accept French assistance to such an extent as to enable the French to interfere as conquerors rather than allies. They offered not only to draw up a memorial indicating the part they had acted, but also to appear for examination before the secret committees, and answer on oath such questions as were put to them. The Government, on the other hand, undertook that they should be ultimately released on condition of going into banishment, though they reserved the right of fixing the time. They promised that they should not be transported as felons, or to any place to which felons were sent, and that Bond should obtain the benefit of this agreement, and they gave a general assurance that no more prisoners should be put to death unless they were concerned in murder,

could give the only information capable of saving this country from an aggravated civil war.' The respite was only announced to Bond twenty minutes before the time appointed for his execution. 'Your friend Neilson,' writes Alexander, 'stretching out his arm with his hand clenched, said, "I hold in my hand every muscle, sinew, nay, fibre of the internal organisation—nay, every ramification of the United Irishmen, and" (gradually opening his hand) "I will make it as plain as the palm of my hand, if our terms are complied with." . . . The vivacity and earnestness of his manner struck me, not with an opinion of his sincerity, but of the impressive habit he must have acquired. I thought I read in his looks great fear of death, but shading itself under a pretended anxiety to save Bond, who appeared next to indifferent about his fate.' See two long and interesting letters to Pelham, July 26, Aug. 4, 1798. (*Pelham MSS.*)

[1] 'The Speaker was frantic against it [the respite of Bond], the popular cry of Dublin loud against it. The yeomen were to lay down their arms; all the loyalists felt themselves deserted. Luckily, as soon as the Chancellor arrived, he expressed himself most warmly in favour of the measure, first in private, then in Parliament, and said that the Government would have been inexcusable if they had not entertained it. *Public* confidence revived.' (Cooke to Pelham, Aug. 9, 1798. *Pelham MSS.*) Alexander notices, that Parnell was 'stronger for non-conciliation' even than the Speaker. Jonah Barrington made a bitter speech in Parliament, in which he said that 'another class of men than loyalists seemed Government's first care.' (Alexander to Pelham, July 26, Aug. 4, 1798.)

though they refused to make this a matter of treaty or stipulation.

Both parties have stated very fully the motives that actuated them. The United Irishmen wished to save the life of Bond, who was already convicted, and the lives of others who might be hereafter condemned. They were convinced that the rebellion was now definitely defeated, and that nothing remained except to make terms. They found that the Government already knew all that they could disclose of their negotiations with France, for even the confidential memorial of McNevin to the French Directory had been produced, in a French translation, before the secret committee; and they believed that a full statement of their own conduct and motives, so far from injuring them, would be in truth their best vindication. In the opinion of Lord Castlereagh, O'Connor and Emmet were very unwilling to enter into this agreement; but Bond, Neilson, and McNevin, whose lives were in special danger, strongly pressed it.

The Government on their side wished to stop the effusion of blood, and to close the rebellion. There had been four capital trials and executions. They feared that many more would only make martyrs. They wished to send out of the country dangerous men, whom they would probably be unable to convict, and they wished above all to establish by undoubted evidence the conspiracy with France. The Chancellor, it is said in a memorial which was drawn up for the Duke of Portland, 'stated in the strongest manner his opinion of the expediency of obtaining, on any terms consistent with the public safety, the confessions of the State prisoners, particularly of McNevin and O'Connor, as the only effectual means of opening the eyes of both countries without disclosing intelligence which could by no means be made public.' 'We get rid of seventy prisoners,' wrote Cooke, 'many of the most important of whom we could not try, and who could not be disposed of without doing such a violence to the principles of law and evidence as could not be well justified. Our zealots and yeomen do not relish this compromise, and there has been a fine buzz on the subject, but it being known the Chancellor most highly approves of it, the tone softens.'[1] It is remark-

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, ii. 376; *Castlereagh Correspondence*, i. 248, 347–353. Compare, with these accounts, that drawn up in a strain

able, however, that Cornwallis himself declared that he would never have consented to this compact if he believed that the lives of the prisoners were in his power, and that there was any reasonable chance of convicting them. With the exception of Bond, and perhaps Neilson, no traitors had really been spared.[1]

The arguments in favour of the treaty were much strengthened by the state of the country, which was still such that a renewed and ferocious outbreak might at any time be expected. Numerous parties of banditti were at large. Murders were of daily occurrence, and the confidential letters of the Ministers show that great uneasiness prevailed.

'The country,' wrote Cooke to Pelham, 'is by no means settled nor secure should the French land, but I think secure if they do not.'[2] A magistrate from Enniscorthy told Pelham, that, except for scattered parties of banditti, that district was almost pacified; but if a body of French troops were landed, nearly all who had lately professed to return to their allegiance would certainly join them, and the recent appearance off the Wexford coast of some ships, which were at first supposed to be French, had produced an immediate change in the demeanour of the people.[3] Higgins warned the Government that the flame was far from quenched, and that a French invasion was expected; and he transmitted a message from Magan, that the rebellion was likely soon to break out in different parts of the kingdom, where it was least expected.[4] The Prince de Bouillon wrote from Jersey, describing the active preparations of the fleet at Brest.[5] Judkin Fitzgerald, however, the terrible High Sheriff of Tipperary, was more confident. The danger, he thought, was much exaggerated, and he specially urged the Government to exercise

of extreme bitterness by McNevin, *Pieces of Irish History*, pp. 142–161. See, too, the accounts by Emmet and by Sweetman, in Madden's *United Irishmen*, iii. 53–59, and that of O'Connor in his *Letter to Lord Castlereagh*, published in 1799.

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, ii. 423.

[2] Cooke to Pelham, Aug. 9, 1798.

[3] C. Colclough, Aug. 12, 1798. (*Pelham MSS.*) About this time, a woman came to some yeomanry at Enniscorthy, promising to point out where some of the plate, plundered in the rebellion, was concealed. Five of them agreed to accompany her to a wood in the neighbourhood. They never returned; and their bodies were soon after found unburied, pierced and mangled with pikes. (*Faulkner's Journal*, Aug. 7, 1798.)

[4] F. H., Aug. 22, 1798. (I.S.P.O.)

[5] D'Auvergne, Prince de Bouillon, to Dundas, July 1798.

their influence to induce the great proprietors to return to their estates. 'The yeomen,' he adds, 'do their duty everywhere perfectly well, without the least reluctance, and it would be the greatest injustice in me not to acknowledge the readiness with which every order of mine is obeyed, and the hearty co-operation of every lord, gentleman, and person of property in this county. I am satisfied we are all determined to act together, and that there is no danger.'[1]

The memorial drawn up by the United Irishmen was an exceedingly skilful document, but it was more of the nature of a defence than of a confession. I have in a former chapter made much use of its statements. It represented the United Irish Society as originally intended to unite the Protestants and Catholics of Ireland, for the attainment of parliamentary reform and Catholic emancipation. It described how its members gradually came to perceive that English influence was the chief support of parliamentary corruption in Ireland, that a reform could only be attained by a separation, and that a separation could only be achieved by alliance with France. It dwelt much on the recall of Lord Fitzwilliam, the establishment of the Orange system, the partiality of magistrates, and the outrages of martial law, and it emphatically repudiated the charge of assassination which was brought against the society. It at the same time described very accurately its organisation, and the successive steps of the negotiations with France. Castlereagh in a confidential letter acknowledged that, in spite of some declamation, it was a truthful document, that it admitted every material fact contained in the secret intelligence, and that it stated the facts in the order in which the Government knew that they had occurred.[2] The memoir, however, was so essentially exculpatory, that the Government thought it advisable to suppress it. The examination before the secret committee was more satisfactory to them, and elicited a public statement of all they desired, though in this case also some

[1] J. Judkin Fitzgerald (Clonmel), July 30.

[2] Castlereagh to Wickham, Aug. 4. See, too, Cooke to Wickham, Aug. 7. 'What a curious memoir,' he says, 'does Lord Castlereagh transmit! It unfolds the true spirit of our Jacobins.' Cornwallis, on the other hand, in returning it to the authors, described it as containing 'many gross misstatements of facts.' (*Cornwallis Correspondence*, i. 381.)

portions of the prisoners' statements were withheld from publication.[1]

About this time, John Claudius Beresford asked in the House of Commons for leave to bring in a Bill to confiscate the properties of men convicted of high treason before a court-martial, as if such a conviction had taken place before a court of civil law. Castlereagh, however, opposed the motion, stating that such a measure lay within the province of the Executive.[2] Shortly after, the Ministers introduced a Bill of attainder confiscating the property of Lord Edward Fitzgerald, Bagenal Harvey, and Cornelius Grogan. Their special object was to affix the stigma of guilt on the memory of Lord Edward, who had been undoubtedly one of the foremost authors of the rebellion, and whose premature death had saved him from all legal penalties. In order, however, to prevent the Bill from appearing altogether personal to the Leinster family, the names of Harvey and Grogan were added.[3] These two men had already expiated their alleged treason on the gallows, and the wealth of the last is much more certain than his guilt. The Bill was introduced by the Attorney-General at the end of July, and several witnesses, among whom Reynolds was the most conspicuous, were examined. It appears to have passed its earlier stages without opposition, but Lord Yelverton strongly objected to it, and in its later stages it was much opposed in both Houses. Dobbs took a prominent part against it;[4] and although the Bill was ultimately carried, it had not yet received the royal assent, when the startling news arrived in Dublin, that a French expedition had landed at Killala Bay.

Of all the many deceptions that had attended the United Irish conspiracy, none was so bitter and so fatal as the complete apathy shown by the French during the two terrible months that had just passed. In truth, since the death of Hoche, the Irish could reckon on no real friend, and Buonaparte from the first took very little interest in their affairs. During the last

[1] See Emmet's statement (Madden, iii. 56). The memoir of the three United Irishmen will be found in the *Castlereagh Correspondence*, i. 353–372. Cornwallis was quite satisfied with the results of the examination. (*Correspondence*, ii. 384.)

[2] *Saunders's Newsletter*, June 28, 1798.

[3] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, ii. 379, 380.

[4] *Faulkner's Journal*, Aug. 2, 1798; *Auckland Correspondence*, iv. 53.

two months, however, of 1797, and in the January and February of 1798, an English invasion was greatly in his thoughts, and very serious preparations for it were made. Buonaparte himself, Kleber, Caffarelli, and Dessaix visited the chief ports on the French coast. A new requisition was sent to Holland, and the army for the invasion of England was rapidly organised. Buonaparte at this time had several interviews with Tone and Lewins, asked many questions about Ireland, received from them maps and reports, but himself said little, though one of the Directory greatly elated them by an assurance 'that France would never grant a peace to England on any terms short of the independence of Ireland.'[1] If an English invasion had taken place, it might have been combined with a movement against Ireland, and it would at all events, if successful, have prevented England from giving assistance to Irish loyalists.

But the more Buonaparte examined the state of the French navy, and the details of the projected enterprise, the less he was satisfied, and at length, towards the close of February, he wrote to the Directory that it must be abandoned. He then, with one of those prompt decisive turns that were so characteristic of his genius, completely changed his policy, and made the conquest of Egypt, and, as a preparation for that conquest, the occupation of Malta, his supreme object. A few days before the Irish rebellion broke out, he had sailed for Malta.[2]

Many years after, when reviewing his career at St. Helena, he spoke of this decision as one of his great errors. 'On what,' he said, 'do the destinies of empires hang! . . . If, instead of the expedition of Egypt, I had made that of Ireland, if slight deranging circumstances had not thrown obstacles in the way of my Boulogne enterprise—what would England have been to-day? and the Continent? and the political world?'[3]

Whether at this time any large expedition could have succeeded in reaching the Irish coast, it is impossible to say; but no one can question that, if it had succeeded at the beginning or in the middle of the rebellion, its effect would have been most serious. If the outbreak in Ireland had taken place a little

[1] Tone's *Memoirs*, ii. 454–458, 462, 473, 474, 476, 479.

[2] See Guillon, *La France et l'Irlande pendant la Révolution*, pp. 331–334.

[3] Las Cases, *Mémoires de Sainte-Hélène*, ii. 335 (ed. 1823).

earlier, or if the Egyptian project had been postponed a little longer, Ireland would probably have become a central object in the military policy of Buonaparte, and the whole course of events might have been changed. Long afterwards, in 1804, Napoleon thought seriously of an Irish expedition, and there is a letter in his correspondence describing the conditions of success;[1] but the moment, since the mutiny of the Nore, in which such an enterprise was most likely to have succeeded, found France abundantly occupied in the Mediterranean. Lewins, in the beginning of June, pressed the claims of his countrymen strongly on the Directory. He reminded them of the promise he had been authorised to send to Ireland, that France would never make peace with England except on the condition of the independence of Ireland. He described with some exaggeration, but probably with perfect good faith, the magnitude and extent of the rebellion, and he urged that 5,000 good French troops, with 30,000 guns and some cannon and munitions, would be sufficient to secure its triumph.[2]

Wolfe Tone was indefatigable in supporting the applications of his friend.[3] The Directors were not unwilling to accede to their demand, but they could do nothing more than effect a slight diversion; and after considerable delay, they gave orders that a number of small expeditions should be directed simultaneously to different points on the Irish coast.[4] Even such a plan, if it had been promptly and skilfully accomplished, might have had a great effect, but, as usual at this time, nothing in the French navy was in good order, and everything was mismanaged. The expedition of Humbert, which was the first ready, consisted of three frigates and only 1,036 soldiers. It was delayed until the rebellion in Ireland had been crushed, and it started alone, as no other expedition was yet ready.

It set sail from the island of Aix on August 6, four days after the great battle of the Nile, in which Nelson had totally shattered the French fleet of Admiral Bruix, destroyed a third part of the naval force of France, made England irresistible in

[1] 7 vendém. an xiii (Sept. 29, 1804).

[2] This letter is in the French Archives de la Marine, and has been printed by Guillon, *La France et l'Irlande pendant la Révolution*, pp. 359–361.

[3] Tone's *Memoirs*, ii. 505–509.

[4] Guillon, pp. 368, 369. The orders of the Directory appear only to have been issued on July 30 (12 thermidor, an vi).

the Mediterranean, and put an end to all chance of a French conquest of Egypt. In order to escape the English, the French took a long circuitous course. They intended to enter Donegal Bay, but were prevented by hostile winds; they then made for Killala Bay, in the county of Mayo, and anchored near the little town of Killala on August 22. English flags flew from their masts, and the port surveyor, as well as the two sons of the bishop, went without suspicion to the fleet, and were detained as prisoners. The same evening, about six o'clock, the French landed. Some fifty yeomen and fencibles who were in Killala were hastily drawn out by Lieutenant Sills to resist the invaders, but they were speedily overpowered. Two of them were killed, nineteen taken prisoners, and the rest put to flight. A sailor named John Murphy, who commanded a small trading vessel that lay in the bay, volunteered to set sail for France bearing a despatch announcing the successful landing.[1]

The Protestant bishop, Dr. Stock, with eleven children,[2] was living in the great castle of Killala, and as it was visitation time, and there was no decent hotel in the town, he was surrounded by several clergymen. Dr. Stock had been very recently appointed to the see, and the appointment had not been a political one, but was entirely due to his merits. He had been a Fellow of Trinity College. He was a distinguished Hebrew scholar, and had published a translation of the Book of Job; he spoke French fluently, and the singularly interesting and graphic account which he wrote of the events that he now witnessed, shows that he was a keen and discriminating judge of men. His palace was at once occupied; a green flag with the inscription, 'Erin-go-bragh,' was hoisted above its gate, and he himself became a prisoner in the hands of the French.[3]

[1] Byrne's *Memoirs*, iii. 54–57.

[2] The bishop is careful to remark, that Mrs. Stock had four other sons.

[3] See his *Narrative of what passed at Killala during the French Invasion*, by an eye-witness. Bishop Stock also wrote a private journal, which has been printed by Maxwell in his *History of the Rebellion of* 1798; and two long letters on the same subject, which will be found in the *Auckland Correspondence*. In addition to his writings and to the Government despatches, the chief original documents relating to Humbert's expedition are: an *Impartial Relation of the Military Operations in consequence of the Landing of the French Troops*, by an officer who served under Lord Cornwallis (1799)—a pamphlet which contains, among other things, an excellent military map; *Notice Historique sur la Descente des Français*, par L. O. Fontaine (adjutant-general of Humbert); and *The Last Speech and Dying Words of Martin McLoughlin*. A book called *Aventures de Guerre au Temps de la République*, by

The French had brought with them three United Irishmen, Matthew Tone, who was a brother of Wolfe Tone; Bartholomew Teeling; and a man named Sullivan, who was nephew to Madgett, the Secretary at the French Foreign Office. They had also an officer named O'Keon, who was an Irishman naturalised in France, and who was very useful, as he had come from the neighbourhood of Ballina, and was thoroughly acquainted with the Irish language.[1] Humbert, their commander, was one of the many adventurers to whom the French Revolution had opened out a career. He was so illiterate that he could do little more than write his name, and his manners were those of a rude, violent, uneducated peasant. He was of good height and fine figure, and in the full vigour of life, but his countenance was not attractive, and he had a small, sleepy, cunning, cruel eye, as of a cat when about to spring. He was, however, an excellent soldier, full of courage, resource, decision, and natural tact, and the bishop soon discovered that much of his rough and violent manner was assumed for the purpose of obtaining immediate obedience. He had served at the siege of Mayence, in La Vendée, and at Quiberon, and had taken part in the expedition to Bantry Bay.

Of the troops he brought with him, the bishop has given a striking picture. To a superficial eye they presented nothing that was imposing. 'Their stature for the most part was low; their complexions pale and sallow, their clothes much the worse for wear,' but it was soon found that they were characterised to a surprising degree by 'intelligence, activity, temperance, patience,' and 'the exactest obedience to discipline.' They were men 'who would be well content to live on bread and potatoes, to drink water, to make the stones of the street their bed, and to sleep in their clothes, with no covering but the canopy of heaven. One half of their number had served in Italy under Buonaparte; the rest were from the Rhine, where they had suffered distresses that well accounted for their persons and wan looks. Several of them declared, with all the marks of sincerity,

Moreau de Jonnès, purports to give the account of an eye-witness, but it is full of errors. This expedition, as well as that of Bantry Bay, has recently been investigated by M. Guillon, with a research that leaves little or nothing to be added.

[1] Stock's *Narrative*, p. 60. Miles Byrne gives several particulars about the later life of O'Keon, or, as he calls him, O'Kean. (*Memoirs*, iii. 64–66.)

that at the siege of Mentz, during the preceding winter, they had for a long time slept on the ground in holes made four feet deep under the snow; and an officer, pointing to his leather small clothes, assured the bishop that he had not taken them off for a twelvemonth.'

Their conduct among the people was most admirable. Humbert at once desired the bishop to be under no apprehension; he assured him that no one should be ill treated, and that the French would take only what was absolutely necessary for their support, and this promise was almost perfectly fulfilled. 'It would be a great injustice,' writes the bishop, 'to the excellent discipline constantly maintained by these invaders while they remained in our town, not to remark that, with every temptation to plunder, which the time and the number of valuable articles within their reach, presented to them, . . . not a single particular of private property was found to have been carried away.' In his own palace, 'the attic story, containing a library and three bedchambers, continued sacred to the bishop and his family; and so scrupulous was the delicacy of the French not to disturb the female part of the house, that not one of them was ever seen to go higher than the middle floor, except on the evening of their success at Castlebar, when two officers begged leave to carry to the family the news of the battle.'

There could hardly be a more hopeless enterprise than that in which this handful of brave men were engaged. They expected to find Ireland in a blaze of insurrection, or at least thrilling with sympathy for French ideas. They came when the rebellion was completely crushed, and reduced to a mere guerilla war in the Wicklow mountains, when there were hardly less than 100,000 armed men at the service of the Crown, and to a province which had been perfectly tranquil during the whole struggle, and which was almost untouched by revolutionary propagandism. A proclamation had been prepared, and was distributed among the poor, ignorant Mayo peasantry, congratulating them on the interest they had taken in the progress of the French Revolution, reminding them that they had been enduring 'punishments, and even death,' for their

[1] N'avez-vous pas enduré constamment les supplices et la mort, parce qu'on vous regardait comme nos amis?' (Guillon, p. 375.)

friendship to France,[1] and adjuring them, by the example of America, and by the memory of many battles, of which they had assuredly never heard, to rise as a man to throw off the English yoke. But Humbert soon found that he was in an atmosphere of thought and feeling wholly different from what he had expected. He was disappointed to find that the bishop, who was the principal person remaining at Killala, would not declare himself on the side of the Revolution, and that the Protestants, who were the most substantial inhabitants, held steadily aloof. Two only, who were notorious drunkards, joined the French, and it was characteristic of the ideas that prevailed, that, on doing so, they thought it necessary to declare their conversion to the Catholic faith.

Many boxes, however, of arms and uniforms had been brought over, and when these were opened, the peasantry speedily streamed in. Though ragged and dirty and half savage, they had strong bodies and quick natural intelligence, and the keen eye of the French general clearly saw, as many English officers had seen before him, that, with the education of good military discipline, they might be turned into soldiers as excellent even as those of Buonaparte. But except a dislike to tithes, which was far more languid in Connaught than in either Munster or Ulster, they had not an idea in common with the French, and no kind of political motive appears to have animated them. They joined the invaders with delight when they learnt that, for the first time in their lives, they were to receive meat every day. They danced with joy like children when they saw the blue uniforms, and the glittering helmets edged with brown paper to imitate leopard's skin, that were provided for them, and they rapturously accepted the guns that were given them, but soon spoiled many of them by their utter inexperience. It was found necessary, indeed, to stop the distribution of ammunition, as the only way of preventing them from using their new toy in shooting crows.

In addition to the desire for meat rations, for uniforms and for guns, the hope of plunder and the love of adventure made many recruits, and there was some faint trace of a religious feeling. Agents were abroad, busily whispering the familiar calumny that the Orangemen were plotting to exterminate the

Catholics,[1] and circulating old prophecies of a religious war,[2] and there was a vague, wide-spread notion, that the French were the special champions of the Catholic faith. The soldiers of the Revolution, whom the panic-stricken priests in other lands had long regarded as the most ferocious and most terrible of the agents of anti-Christ, now found themselves, to their own astonishment and amusement, suddenly transfigured into Crusaders; surrounded by eager peasants, who declared 'that they were come to take arms for France and the Blessed Virgin.' 'God help these simpletons,' said one of the French officers to Bishop Stock; 'if they knew how little we care about the Pope or his religion, they would not be so hot in expecting help from us;' and old soldiers of the Italian army exclaimed with no small disgust, that, having just driven the Pope out of Italy, they had never expected to meet him again in Ireland. The Irish, on their side, were not a little surprised to find that these strange soldiers 'of the Blessed Virgin' never appeared at mass, could not be induced to treat a priest with the smallest respect, and always preferred to carry on their communications through the heretical bishop.[3]

The story is one which would have more of the elements of comedy than of tragedy, if it were not for the dark spectre of a bloody retribution that was behind. The French did what they could to arm and discipline their wild recruits. They restrained them severely from plunder, and they treated them like children, which, indeed, in mind and character they truly were. After reconnoitring Ballina, and scattering a small party of soldiers in its neighbourhood, they pushed on towards Castlebar, leaving 200 French soldiers to keep order at Killala, and a few others at Ballina. There were, however, no signs of a general rising in their favour, or of any real wish for their success, and the kind of recruits they had hastily armed were not likely to be of much use. The number of these recruits has been very differently stated, and is not easy to ascertain. It appears that, in the course of the French expedition, the

[1] *A Narrative of what passed at Killala*, p. 24. See, too, on the assiduity and success with which this rumour was spread through Mayo, Musgrave, p. 566.

[2] See Musgrave, pp. 560, 561.

[3] *Narrative of what passed at Killala*, pp. 59, 80, 81; Maxwell, p. 259.

whole of the 4,000 or 5,000 guns they had brought over were distributed, and that after the distribution recruits streamed in, but the distribution of arms is no measure of the number of Irish the French could bring into the field. Many who had received guns and uniforms, availed themselves of the first opportunity to fly to their mountain cabins with their spoil. Some, disguising their voices and with new stories, came again and again, in order to obtain double or treble provisions of arms, ammunition, and uniforms, and then disappeared and sold them for whisky. Many recruits were left at Killala, and perhaps some others at Ballina, and it is probable that the number of Irish who were with Humbert when he arrived at Castlebar, little, if at all, exceeded 500.[1]

Major-General Hutchinson at this time commanded in Connaught, and he was at Galway when the news of the invasion arrived. His province had been so quiet during the rebellion, that it contained much fewer troops than the other parts of Ireland, but he could at once assemble near 4,000 men. He lost no time in collecting them, and in moving towards the scene of danger; but Cornwallis, on hearing of the invasion, at once sent General Lake, as a more experienced soldier, to command in Connaught; gave orders for a concentration of many thousands of troops from other provinces, and hastened to go down himself to lead them. Hutchinson arrived at Castlebar on the 25th. Whatever may have been the secret dispositions of the people, he found the whole country through which he passed, and the whole neighbourhood of Castlebar, perfectly quiet, though there were alarming rumours that 1,800 Irish had joined the French at Killala and Ballina. He was obliged, in moving his troops, to leave Leitrim and Roscommon open, and the bridges of the Upper Shannon almost without protection, but not the smallest inconvenience ensued. All Connaught, except in the immediate neighbourhood of Killala, was absolutely peaceful.[2] It was har-

[1] This is the estimate of General Hutchinson (*Cornwallis Correspondence*, ii. 410); Cooke states that Lake's secretary, who was in the battle, said 'he saw no peasantry;' and Cornwallis reported to Portland on Sept. 1, that he had good reason to believe that the French 'have as yet been joined by a very inconsiderable portion of the inhabitants, and those (with very few exceptions) of the lowest order. No material disaffection has shown itself in other parts of the kingdom.' (Ibid. p. 397.) See, too, p. 402, and Stock's *Narrative*, pp. 21, 22.

[2] *Impartial Relation of the Military Operations in Ireland, in*

vest time, and the people were busily engaged in the fields; and though they were not actively loyal as an English population might have been, and would no doubt have submitted very readily to a French Government, they were perfectly inoffensive, and desired only to be left alone.

Very few new recruits now came in to the French, and the relations between the French and their allies were already very tense. The French were learning every day more clearly, that they had been utterly deceived about the state of Ireland and the disposition of its people. They saw no signs of a rising. They perceived plainly that their recruits were as far as possible from being either heroes or patriots, fanatics or revolutionists; that the sole object of a great proportion of them was plunder; that they were always ready to desert; and that they were likely to prove perfectly worthless in battle.[1] The French frigates had sailed away; English vessels were hovering around the Connaught coast, to prevent either rescue or escape, and unless the aspect of affairs was speedily changed, by a general rising, or by the landing of a new French force, it was absolutely hopeless. The Irish recruits, on their side, had found that service under a French general was a very different thing from a mere plundering raid, and they complained bitterly of hard labour and severe discipline and contemptuous treatment. Two of them were shot, probably for good reasons, by the French. The others were employed in digging entrenchments, and were often, in the absence of horses, harnessed to the cannon or to the waggons.[2]

General Lake arrived at Castlebar on the night of the 26th, and at once took the command. The forces that were concentrated in that town were very considerable. In addition to those under General Hutchinson, which amounted to nearly 4,000

consequence of the Landing of French Troops under General Humbert. by an officer under the command of Lord Cornwallis (1799), pp. 5, 6–12.

[1] Miss Edgeworth, who lived not very far from the scene of the rebellion, and who had good means of information, has described forcibly the character of the recruits, and the disgust expressed by the French. (*Life of R. L. Edgeworth*, ii. 214, 215.)

[2] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, ii. 402. See a curious pamphlet, published at Cork, called *The Last Speech and Dying Words of Martin McLoughlin.* It is evidently the work of some one who was intimately acquainted with the campaign; but it is equally evident, that it was not the composition of an uneducated peasant. It gives a vivid picture of the alleged ill treatment of the Irish. Fontaine notices that they were employed to draw a waggon with ammunition, as there were no horses. (*Notice de la Descente des Français*, p. 58.)

men, General Taylor had marched from Sligo towards Castlebar, on the 25th, with about 1,200 men, chiefly yeomanry.[1] There were two ways from Ballina to Castlebar. The regular road lay through the village of Foxford, eleven miles from Castlebar, and this was believed to be the only road by which an army could march. Near that village it crossed the river Moy, and at that point could easily be guarded. General Taylor, at the head of his detachment, undertook to protect it, and his corps had been strengthened by the Kerry Militia and the Leinster Fencibles which had been detached from Castlebar.[2] Humbert, however, completely outmanœuvred his opponents. Taking a wild rocky path, which had been left unguarded because it was believed to be completely impracticable for an army, he avoided the troops that were waiting for him, and after a wonderful march of no less than fifteen horus,[3] appeared before Castlebar about seven o'clock on the morning of the 27th He had hoped to surprise it, but the news of his approach had been brought shortly before, to Hutchinson and Lake, and they had drawn out their troops, numbering 1,600 or 1,700 men,[4] on a height above Castlebar, flanked by a lake and by a marsh, and so strong that it would appear madness for a tired and inferior force to attack it. The troops of Hutchinson were only militia, fencibles, and yeomen, but they greatly outnumbered the enemy. They were fresh from a night's rest, and in addition to their immense advantage of position, they had ten pieces of cannon and one howitzer. There were probably little more than 700 Frenchmen, though they were followed by a considerable body of inefficient Irish recruits. They had only thirty or forty mounted men, and their whole artillery consisted of two small four-pound guns, which had been dragged across the mountains by the peasantry.

The soldiers, however, who had been trained under Kleber and Buonaparte, were of a very different type from the Irish militia. At the sight of the enemy they seemed to forget their fatigue, and at once pressed on rapidly to the attack. In the

[1] *Impartial Narrative*, pp. 12, 13.
[2] Ibid. p. 14.
[3] See Humbert's despatch, Guillon, p. 384.
[4] Fontaine asserts that there was, in addition, a reserve force in Castlebar itself. (P. 16.) Compare General Hutchinson's statement, *Cornwallis Correspondence*, ii. 410.

face of a deadly cannonade, which swept away many of them, and scattered their Irish allies far and wide; in the face of the heavy fire of musketry, the little band of Frenchmen swiftly climbed the steep ascent, and then, with their bayonets fixed, rushed impetuously on the foe. The affair lasted only a few minutes. The artillery, it is admitted, were well served. Lord Roden's cavalry showed real courage, but the rest of the troops of Lake at once broke, and fled in the wildest terror. They were driven, at the point of the bayonet, through the chief street of Castlebar, and for some distance beyond the town. All their cannon, all their flags, all their munitions, were taken. The road was strewn with the muskets which they cast aside in their headlong flight, and though the French soon desisted from the pursuit, the remains of the beaten army never paused till they reached Tuam, which was thirty miles from the scene of action, and then after a short rest they again pressed on towards Athlone. Some of the men who were beaten at Castlebar are said to have reached that town at one o'clock on the 29th, having traversed sixty-three miles in twenty-seven hours.[1]

This was the flight known in Ireland as 'the race of Castlebar.' Never was there a rout more abject or more complete, and those who witnessed it must have asked themselves what would have happened if, at any time within the two preceding years, 12,000 or 15,000 French soldiers like those of Humbert had been landed. 'Nothing could exceed the misconduct of the troops, with the exception of the artillery . . . and of Lord Roden's Fencibles,' was Hutchinson's verdict on his army.[2] 'The panic' of the troops was described by Lake as 'beyond description;'[3] and Cornwallis feared that the effect on the country would be so serious, that, in spite of the vast forces now in Ireland, he urged upon Portland the necessity of sending as great a reinforcement as possible from Great Britain either to Dublin, Waterford, or Belfast.[4] The impression the affair made upon competent judges in England, may be inferred from a letter from Auckland to Cooke. 'In the course of twenty-four eventful years,' he wrote, 'it has happened to me to receive many unpleasant and unexpected accounts of military defeats

[1] Gordon, p. 237.
[2] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, ii. 410.
[3] Ibid. p. 391.
[4] Ibid. p. 392.

and disgraces. One of the hardest strokes in that way was the surrender of Burgoyne's army at Saratoga; but I do not think it either affected or surprised me so much as your Castlebar catastrophe. . . . If the impression of that business should have encouraged and brought forward a general explosion, the consequences may be very serious, and God send us a good deliverance.'[1]

Even this, however, is not a full measure of the misconduct of the militia. 'Their conduct,' wrote an officer, speaking of the Longford and Kilkenny regiments, 'and that of the carbiniers and Frazer's, in action on the retreat from Castlebar and Tuam, and the depredations they committed on the road, exceed, I am told, all description. Indeed, they have, I believe, raised a spirit of discontent and disaffection, which did not before exist in this part of the country. Every endeavour has been made to prevent plunder in our corps, but it really is impossible to stop it in some of the regiments of militia with us, particularly the light battalions.' The women who accompanied the soldiers were described as the worst plunderers. Cornwallis was obliged to issue a stern order, calling on the officers 'to assist him in putting a stop to the licentious conduct of the troops, and in saving the wretched inhabitants from being robbed, and in the most shocking manner ill treated, by those to whom they had a right to look for safety and protection.' He appointed a provost-marshal to follow with a guard in the train of the army, to protect the villagers, and he threatened with instant execution any soldier who was found robbing, or with stolen articles in his possession.[2]

The soldiers of Humbert had well earned a period of rest, and they remained at Castlebar from August 27 to September 4. Humbert, however, was not inactive. He saw that, unless a new French expedition arrived, his only chance was to win a general support from the country, and he hoped to attain this end by issuing a proclamation establishing a provisional government in Connaught, and making arrangements for a general arming of the people.[3] One of his first measures was to recall the 200

[1] I.S.P.O. [2] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, ii. 394, 395.
[3] Guillon, pp. 387, 388.

French soldiers he had left at Killala, and who had hitherto succeeded most admirably in preserving order. Three French officers only were left there, to guard the town with the assistance of Irish recruits.

The terror of the bishop and of the few Protestant inhabitants at the removal of their protectors was very great, and they feared that the tragedies of the Wexford rebellion would now be reproduced in Connaught. They lived, in truth, for three weeks in constant danger and alarm; and threats and rumours of the most terrible description were abundantly circulated. But in Mayo the people had not been driven to madness by flogging and house-burning. They had been well treated by their great landlords, and appear to have had no dislike to them, and although agitators had begun to ply their venomous trade, fanning religious passions, and telling the people that, if they followed the French, they would never again have to pay either tithes or rent,[1] Connaught had not yet been drawn into their net. There was some plunder in Killala, and much more in the open country around it, where many gentlemen's houses had been deserted by their owners, but there was little fanaticism and no real ferocity, and probably not more violence and outrage than would have taken place in any country in which the people were poor, ignorant, and lawless, and in which all the restraining influences that protect property had been suddenly withdrawn. Musgrave, with his usual malevolent partiality, has endeavoured to blacken the character of these poor peasants, by collecting instances not only of their misdeeds, but even of their evil intentions. An impartial judge, who considers their circumstances, and remembers how savagely in other parts of Ireland the civil war had been provoked, and waged, and repressed, and punished, will, I think, pronounce their conduct to have been on the whole remarkably good. The testimony of Bishop Stock on this subject is beyond suspicion. 'It is a circumstance worthy of particular notice,' he writes, 'that during the whole time of this civil commotion, not a drop of blood was shed by the Connaught rebels, except in the field of war. It is true, the example and influence of the French went a

[1] See Martin McLoughlin, pp. 6, 7.

great way to prevent sanguinary excesses. But it will not be deemed fair to ascribe to this cause alone the forbearance of which we were witnesses, when it is considered what a range of country lay at the mercy of the rebels for several days after the French power was known to be at an end.'[1]

This fact is especially remarkable, when we remember the large number of refugees, driven by lawless violence from the North, who had taken refuge in Mayo. It is, however, certain that here, as in other parts of Catholic Ireland, what little fanaticism existed was almost entirely religious. There was no question of nationality or parliamentary reform. The feeling of the people was not primarily directed against England, or against monarchy, or against landlords. The natural spontaneous division was between Catholics and Protestants; and a disarming of the Protestants, the confiscation of their property, and their expulsion from power and from Ireland, were frequently threatened. Except at Castlebar, where much indiscriminate plunder seems to have followed the capture of the town, nearly all who were robbed, or whose houses were injured, were Protestants. The few persons of some weight and education who joined the French, appear to have been all Catholics. Several priests assisted, or at least connived, at the rebellion, though Bishop Stock attributes their conduct much less to fanaticism or seditious dispositions, than to their utterly dependent position, which made it necessary for them to adopt the political creed of their people. This dependence, the bishop truly said, was one of the chief dangers of Ireland, and he believed that it would continue till the priests were paid by the State. Several Protestant places of worship were injured, and it is a remarkable illustration of the great distance that separated the Connaught rebellion from the ideas of the United Irishmen, that the one Presbyterian meeting-house in the neighbourhood was the special object of hostility, and was soon reduced to a wreck.

This hostility was largely due to an attempt which had been made to spread Protestantism in Mayo. The motives which inspired such attempts in the eighteenth century are so different from those of modern missionary societies, that they have often been misunderstood. In the period immediately following

[1] *Narrative*, pp. 24, 25.

the Revolution, they had been especially political. At a later period they were mainly social and industrial. The Irish gentry at this time were singularly free from theological fanaticisms and speculations, but they were convinced that in Ireland at least, Protestantism incontestably represented the higher level of order, industry, intelligence, and civilisation, and they believed that all these things would follow in its wake. Even the Charter Schools, which were distinctly proselytising, and which led to some of the worst abuses in Irish life, were probably originally due much less to an anxiety about the condition of Catholic children in another world, than to a desire to bring them under a more healthy and civilising influence in this. In the same way, it was a widespread belief among philanthropic Irishmen in the eighteenth century, that the most effectual method of reclaiming the more barbarous portions of the island, was to plant in them small colonies of industrious and intelligent Protestant manufacturers, which might act as centres of civilisation, and gradually raise the level around them. This was the policy that led to the plantation of German palatines and of French refugees, and it was sometimes pursued by private individuals. We have had a conspicuous example of it in the colony established by Jackson at Forkhill; and some years before the period with which our narrative is at present concerned, an Earl of Arran had planted a colony of industrious Presbyterian weavers from the North at a little village called Mullifaragh, near Killala. It speedily took root and flourished, and when the rebellion broke out, it numbered not less than 1,000 souls. These men were now denounced as Orangemen; they were plundered of their property; their houses were wrecked, their looms destroyed, and a great number of them were carried as prisoners to Ballina.[1]

Charost, who was the principal of the three French officers left at Killala, steadily opposed these acts of violence. He did all in his power to prevent the destruction of the Presbyterian colony, and he made a special journey to Ballina to release the prisoners. Having, like the other French officers, expected to

[1] Stock's *Narrative*, pp. 81–88, 98. It appears from Bishop Stock, that there were some Orangemen in Connaught. The bishop had much opposed the extension of the society to this province.

find in Ireland a population prepared to struggle earnestly against English rule, he was utterly disgusted with what he saw about him, and he more than once expressed his contempt for his allies.[1] It was, in truth, not surprising that these poor western peasants should have been unwilling to encounter hardships and dangers for political causes about which they knew nothing and cared nothing.

The three officers showed an admirable zeal and courage in preserving order and repressing outrage. A strong patrol was appointed to parade through the town and its environs to the distance of three miles every night, but as robberies and midnight outrages were very frequent, Charost issued a proclamation inviting all inhabitants, without distinction of religion or party, to come to him and receive arms from the French stores, for the sole purpose of securing property and order, and on no other condition than a promise of restoring them to him when he called for them. Many Protestants, who had no sympathy with the invaders, gladly accepted this condition, obtained arms from the French commander, and would have entered upon their duties if it had not been for the violent and almost mutinous protest of the recruits. They protested against arming Protestants, or any persons who would not join in the rebellion, and they intimidated the Protestants into resigning their arms. The confusion of the three languages in which all orders were given, greatly added to the difficulty of the situation, and Bishop Stock appears to have been much employed in the negotiations. Streams of peasants were pouring in from the country; robberies were of daily and nightly occurrence, and for two or three days the danger was great. At length a compromise was arrived at. A regular provisional government was established in Killala and the neighbourhood, for the sole purpose of maintaining order, and although it was purely Catholic, it was directed by respectable Catholic inhabitants, who had taken no part in the rebellion, and who now came forward with the full approbation and sanction of the Protestant bishop. Under this system, and under the

[1] Stock's *Narrative*, p. 86. In his private journal, the bishop mentions that he overheard another French officer say to his commander: 'Do you know what I would do with these Irish devils, if I had a body to form out of them? I would pick out one-third of them, and, by the Lord, I would shoot the rest.' (Maxwell, p. 259.)

energetic direction of the French officers, a very tolerable degree of order and security prevailed in the town and in its immediate neighbourhood.[1]

At Castlebar, Humbert soon found that his hope of a general rising was vain. A considerable number of the militia, who had served under Lake, had deserted to him, and as they were all Catholics, and as rumours of disaffection among the Catholic militia had previously been very rife, their conduct has been often ascribed to deliberate treachery, but it is at least equally probable that they acted merely under the influence of panic, as many of them seem to have subsequently deserted from the French.[2] Some hundreds of recruits, chiefly from the mountains in the western part of Mayo, also came in, but they were nearly all poor, ignorant men, of the lowest class, attracted by the hope of plunder, and scarcely anyone of real weight was among them. Humbert found his new recruits useful in throwing up entrenchments. He tried to give them some notions of military discipline, and he armed them with the muskets which were thrown away by the troops in their flight, but he found that there was no real or genuine national movement in his favour. In the meantime, Cornwallis was hurrying to the scene of action at the head of irresistible forces, and he was a man of far greater military talent than Lake or Hutchinson. On August 28, he had reached Athlone; on the 30th, he was at Ballinamore; and on September 4, he arrived at Hollymount, within about thirteen miles of Castlebar. On that morning, Humbert, finding that further delay would be fatal, left Castlebar, and directed his course by long, swift, forced marches to Sligo. He probably desired to reach the coast, where reinforcements were principally expected; to kindle insurrection in new fields, and to select the line of march where he was least likely to meet a crushing British army; and he appears to have had a somewhat wild pro-

[1] See the full account in Bishop Stock's *Narrative*. The bishop says: 'Whatever could be effected by vigilance, resolution, and conduct, for the safety of a place confided to them, was, to a surprising degree, effected for the district of Killala by these three French officers, without the support of a single soldier of their own country, and that for the long space of twenty-three days, from the first of September to the day of the battle.' (P. 52.)

[2] Cooke reports that Humbert afterwards 'said, 200 of the Longford and Kilkenny [Militia] at one time joined them, but they all deserted from them, except about 60.' (*Cornwallis Correspondence*, ii. 402.)

ject of ultimately making his way to Dublin, and raising the country about it.[1]

His position, however, was hopeless, for the forces now concentrated in Connaught were overwhelming. General Knox, who had borne so great a part in Ulster politics, had at this time been under orders for the West Indies, and had actually embarked at Portsmouth, when he was suddenly recalled, and with a large detachment of English troops, he landed at Galway in the beginning of September.[2] The defeated army of Lake had been in some degree reorganised, and having been strengthened by a junction with the troops of General Taylor, it was ordered to follow on the steps of the French without hazarding a general engagement,[3] while Cornwallis proceeded along the line from Hollymount to Carrick-on-Shannon, with an army which is said to have numbered not less than 20,000 men. Sligo, which was the object of the march of the French, was garrisoned by militia, and as the invaders approached the town, Colonel Vereker, who believed that only a detachment of the French were approaching, issued forth at the head of about 300 Limerick Militia, thirty light dragoons, and two curricle guns, and attacked the vanguard at a place called Colooney, about five miles from Sligo. These militiamen, unlike those at Castlebar, fought most gallantly for about an hour against a greatly superior force of excellent French troops; and although they were ultimately beaten with the loss of their two cannon, the French lost both men and time they could ill spare. Humbert supposed the troops of Vereker to be the advanced guard of an army, and he accordingly suddenly changed his plan. In doing so, he appears to have committed a great error. If he had continued, Sligo must have been taken, as it was abandoned by Vereker, and the French might then have possibly evaded the army of Cornwallis, and prolonged the struggle for some time in the mountains of the North. It is probable, however, that Humbert knew little or nothing of the real position of the English troops, and that he was influenced by news which had just arrived, that an insurrection had broken out about Granard, and that large bodies of men were in

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, ii. 402. See, too, Musgrave, p. 603.

[2] *Faulkner's Journal*, Sept. 6, 1798.

[3] Compare the *Impartial Relation*, pp. 20, 27; *Cornwallis Correspondence*, ii. 401.

arms in the counties of Longford and Westmeath. If the French could make their way through the armies that beleaguered them, to the country which was in insurrection, all might still be well.

The fight of Colooney had taken place on the morning of the 5th, and Humbert next marched rapidly to Drummahair, and then, turning inland towards Lough Allen and the Shannon, endeavoured to make his way to Granard, hotly pursued by the troops of Lake. The march was so rapid, that he was obliged to leave three of his guns dismounted on the road, and to throw five other pieces of artillery into the water. He crossed the Shannon at Ballintra, but had not time to destroy the bridge; reached Cloone on the evening of the 7th, and there gave his wearied men a few hours' rest. It was very necessary, for it was computed that since the French had left Castlebar, they had marched 110 miles.[1] Many of the Irish, seeing that the struggle was hopeless, and knowing that they had no quarter to expect, had escaped after the affair at Colooney;[2] but at Cloone, Humbert received a deputation from the insurgents at Granard. His adjutant-general described their chief as half a madman, but a madman whose courage and fanaticism might well raise a flame in the country, and he says that, 'he spoke only of fighting for the Blessed Virgin Mary, whose champion he declared himself to be.'[3]

It was impossible, however, for the French to reach Granard. Every mile of their march from Drummahair brought them nearer to Cornwallis, who now completely intercepted them by reaching Carrick on the 7th, and then marching late at night to Mochill, which was three miles from Cloone, and the delay at Cloone enabled Lake to come up with the enemy. On the 8th, the little body of French found themselves surrounded, at a place called Ballinamuck, by the combined armies of Lake and Cornwallis, and after a short resistance, the position being absolutely hopeless, these brave men at last surrendered. Only 844 men remained of the little band which for eighteen days had so seriously imperilled the British dominion in Connaught. The

[1] Guillon, p. 395.

[2] Martin McLoughlin (p. 18). Musgrave states that many Irish deserted from the French to Lake in the course of the pursuit, and that Lake recommended them to mercy—a fact sufficiently unusual to be commemorated. (Musgrave, p. 609.)

[3] Guillon, p. 396.

Irish who still remained with the French, were excluded from quarter, and cut down without mercy. No accurate or official statistics on this subject are preserved, but it is stated that 500 were killed, but that many others succeeded in escaping across the bogs. Many of these made their way to Killala, and took part in its final defence.[1] The loyalists' loss in killed, wounded, and missing was only nineteen men.[2] Matthew Tone and Teeling, though captured with the French, were sent to Dublin, tried by court-martial, condemned, and hanged.[3]

The short rebellion in Connaught was now nearly over. On the 9th, Cornwallis, just before his return to Dublin, issued a general order congratulating his troops warmly on their conduct, and he added: 'The corps of yeomanry, in the whole country through which the army has passed, have rendered the greatest services, and are peculiarly entitled to the acknowledgment of the Lord Lieutenant, from their not having tarnished their courage and loyalty . . . by any acts of wanton cruelty towards their deluded fellow-subjects.'[4] The insurrection about Granard, which at one time seemed likely to assume formidable proportions, was speedily suppressed by Irish yeomen, with the assistance of a small force of Argyle Fencibles.[5] In the part of

[1] Stock's *Narrative*, p. 97.

[2] Compare the accounts in the *Impartial Relation*, in Guillon, and in Gordon. The letters in the *Cornwallis* and *Castlereagh Correspondences* throw very little light on the details. Fontaine says, the Irish escaped with the exception of 300, who defended themselves to the last, and were all cut to pieces; and he adds, that two brothers named Macdonald performed prodigies of valour. (Fontaine, p. 41.) Musgrave pretends that the French, on surrendering, loaded their Irish allies with reproaches. Maxwell quotes the following passage from the manuscript 'Journal of a Field Officer:' 'After the action, the regiment was marched to Carrick-on-Shannon, where, in the court house, there were collected a couple of hundred rebel prisoners, taken in arms. An order arrived from Lord Cornwallis, directing a certain number of them to be hanged without further ceremony, and bits of paper were rolled up, the word "death" being written on the number ordered, and, with these in his hat, the adjutant, Captain Kay (on whom devolved the management of this wretched lottery), entered the court house, and the drawing began. As fast as a wretch drew the fatal ticket, he was handed out, and hanged at the door. I am not sure of the exact number thus dealt with, but seventeen were actually hanged. It was a dreadful duty to devolve upon any regiment; but somehow or other, men's minds had grown as hard as the nether millstone.' (Maxwell, pp. 243, 244.)

[3] Madden gives, from an old magazine, a report of Matthew Tone's defence, from which he appears to have pretended that he had only come to Ireland because he was a French soldier, and had no sympathy with Irish treason. His brother's journals sufficiently prove the falsehood of the plea. (See Madden's *United Irishmen*, ii. 112–116.)

[4] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, ii. 401, 402.

[5] Gordon, pp. 244–247.

Mayo which the French had endeavoured to raise, the disturbances lasted a few days longer. On September 12, at three in the morning, a great mob of rebels or bandits attacked the garrison which had been placed in Castlebar, but they were met with great courage and easily defeated. Thirty or forty prisoners were brought in; they included one Frenchman, and several men who wore French uniforms.[1]

Almost the whole country was now reduced to order, and Killala was the only place where there was any serious resistance. Even after the surrender of the French, many peasants assembled to defend the town. As the French guns had been all distributed, great numbers of pikes were hastily manufactured, and there were all the signs of a sanguinary contest. '750 recruits,' Bishop Stock writes, 'were counted before the castle gate on the 11th, who came to offer their services for retaking the neighbouring towns, that had returned to their allegiance. . . . The talk of vengeance on the Protestants was louder and more frequent, the rebels were drilled regularly, ammunition was demanded, and every preparation made for an obstinate defence.'[2] Many of the rebels desired to imprison the whole Protestant population, and to preserve them as hostages in case the troops adopted, as there was too good reason to believe they would, the policy of extending no mercy to rebels; but on receiving news from Castlebar that General Trench, who commanded the loyalists, had treated, and meant to treat, his prisoners with humanity, they abandoned their intention. Except for the plunder of some houses, and the destruction of much property, the Protestants remained unharmed till the end.[3]

A force of about 1,200 militiamen with five cannon now marched upon Killala, and they reached it on September 23. It should be noticed, that among the soldiers who distinguished themselves in the capture of Killala, a foremost place has been given to the Kerry Militia, who, with the exception of their officers, were probably all Catholics. Of the other troops, a large proportion were Scotch, but some were Downshire and Queen's County Militia.

[1] Gordon p. 248. See, too, a letter of Captain Urquhart, who seems to have commanded at Castlebar. (Sept. 12, I.S.P.O.) He says, the conduct of the troops was most exemplary.

[2] Stock's *Narrative*, pp. 70–72, 88, 89, 97, 98.

[3] Ibid. pp. 100–114.

The last scene presented the same savage and revolting features which disgraced the repression in Wexford. A long line of blazing cabins marked the course of the advancing troops, and the slaughter in the town was terrible. The rebel force scarcely exceeded 800 or 900 men, and in the absence of their allies, they showed more courage than they had yet displayed in Connaught. The bishop, who was an eye-witness of the scene, describes them as 'running upon death with as little appearance of reflection or concern as if they were hastening to a show.'[1] But those who had guns, showed themselves ludicrously incapable of using them. After twenty minutes' resistance, they broke and fled, and were fiercely pursued by the troops. Numbers were cut down in the streets. Many others, who had fled to the seashore, were swept away by the fire of a cannon which was placed at the opposite side of the bay. Some took refuge in the houses, and in these cases the innocent inhabitants often perished with the rebels. After the battle was over, and even during the whole of the succeeding day, unresisting peasants were hunted down and slaughtered in the town, and it was not till the evening of that day, that the sounds of the muskets, that were discharged with little intermission at flying and powerless rebels, ceased. The town itself was by this time like a place taken by storm, and although the general and officers are said to have tried to restrain their soldiers, they utterly failed.[2]

Bishop Stock estimates that about 400 rebels were killed in the battle and immediately after it. He mentions that of fifty-three deserters of the Longford Militia, who had come into Killala after the defeat of Castlebar, not one returned alive to his home;[3] and that so many corpses lay unburied, that ravens, attracted by the prey, multiplied that year to an unexampled extent through the fields of Mayo.[4] He adds a bitter complaint of 'the predatory habits of the soldiery.' The 'militia seemed to think they had a right to take the property they had been the means of preserving, and to use it as their own whenever they stood in need of it. Their rapacity differed in no respect from that of the rebels, except that they seized upon things

[1] Stock's *Narrative*, p. 123.
[2] Ibid. pp. 123–127.
[3] Ibid. pp. 39, 123.
[4] Ibid. p. 27.

with somewhat less of ceremony or excuse, and that his Majesty's soldiers were incomparably superior to the Irish traitors, in dexterity at stealing.'[1] A long succession of courts-martial followed, and several more or less prominent persons, who had joined the French, were hanged. Some poor mountain districts, where the wretched fugitives had found a shelter, next occupied the attention of the commander. The weather had broken up, and the fierce storms of rain and wind which, as winter draws on, seldom fail to sweep that bleak Atlantic coast, had begun. 'General Trench, therefore made haste to clear the wild districts of the Laggan and Erris, by pushing detachments into each, who were able to do little more than to burn a number of cabins; for the people had too many hiding places to be easily overtaken.'[2]

Such was the manner in which the rebellion was suppressed in a province where it would never have arisen but for foreign instigation; where it was accompanied by no grave crimes, and where the rebels had invariably spared the lives of such Protestants as lived quietly among them. Can any impartial reader wonder at the deep, savage, enduring animosities that were produced? Can he wonder that the districts, where so many poor peasants had been burnt out of their cabins when the winter storms were approaching, should have soon after been infested by robbers and cattle houghers?

Humbert and the French soldiers who were taken at Ballinamuck were sent to England, but soon after exchanged. The three French officers who had so admirably maintained order at Killala were, upon the urgent representation of Bishop Stock, placed in a different category. An order was given that they should be set at liberty, and sent home without exchange; but the Directory refused to accept the offer, stating that the officers had only done their duty, 'and no more than any Frenchman

[1] Stock's *Narrative*, p. 136.

[2] Ibid. pp. 138, 139. In the Irish State Paper Office, there is a letter from the Rev. Robert Andrews, of Castlebar, describing the capture of Killala, and based on information received from Dean Thompson, who was a prisoner in that town. It fully corroborates the account of Bishop Stock. He speaks of the 'immense carnage' among the rebels, and the release of the prisoners, and says: 'I have the pleasure to add, that not one of the prisoners suffered, owing to the gallantry of the French officers there, who remained faithful to the few devoted Protestants. Their lives were repeatedly threatened. No prisoners except the chiefs were taken.' (Sept. 23, 1798.)

would have done in the same situation.' Of the three United Irishmen who came over with Humbert, two, as we have seen, were hanged, but the third succeeded in concealing his nationality. O'Keon was tried by court-martial; but having succeeded in satisfying the court that he was a naturalised Frenchman, he was treated as a prisoner of war.

The French project for a series of expeditions to the Irish coast was not wholly abandoned, and two others took place, one of which was completely insignificant, while the other might have been very serious. Napper Tandy had been for some time one of the most prominent of a little band of Irish refugees, who were plotting against England and quarrelling among themselves at Paris. Though still under sixty, his constitution appears to have been much worn out, and he was always spoken of as an old man. For about thirty-five years he had been living a life of incessant political agitation or conspiracy, and, like most men of this stamp, it had become essential to his happiness. He was now very vain, very quarrelsome, and very drunken, and he had joined with the priest O'Coigly, and with Thomas Muir, the Scotch Jacobin, who had escaped from Botany Bay, in bitter opposition to Tone and to Lewins. Tone had once looked on him with some respect and even admiration; and as late as the October of 1797, he had described him to Talleyrand in complimentary terms,[1] but in his private journal he makes no secret of his boastfulness and mendacity. He accuses him of having told the French authorities that he was an experienced military man; that he was a man of great property in Ireland; that he had such influence, that if he only appeared there, 30,000 men would rise to arms.[2] Napper Tandy, however, was quite ready to risk his life in an almost desperate enterprise, and the French were quite ready to try an experiment which would cost them little. They gave him the title of General, sent him over to Dunkirk, and placed a swift corvette, named the 'Anacreon,' at his disposal, with a small party of soldiers and marines, and a considerable supply of arms and ammunition

[1] This was in a letter to Talleyrand, 24 vendémiaire, an vi (Oct. 15, 1797), giving the names of the Irish he knew personally at Paris. He calls Tandy, a 'respectable vieillard, connu par son patriotisme depuis 30 ans.' (French Foreign Office.)

[2] Tone's *Memoirs*, ii. 460, 461, 467. Compare *Castlereagh Correspondence*, i. 406.

for distribution, and he sailed from Dunkirk for the north coast of Ireland on September 3 or 4.

Several United Irishmen were on board the 'Anacreon,' and among them there were two who had long been heartily sick of the conspiracy, and were eagerly looking for an opportunity of escaping from it. One of them was a man, from the county of Armagh, named Murphy, who had been a private tutor in London, and had there fallen into a circle of United Irishmen, of whom O'Coigly, Lawless, Binns and Turner were the most conspicuous. O'Coigly had persuaded him that, with his knowledge of languages, he would become 'a great man,' if he went to France, and he accordingly left England, and was employed in some missions by the conspirators. Accompanied by another United Irishman, named George Orr,[1] he went to Hamburg in April 1798, and was in communication with Bourdon, the French minister there: the two Irishmen then proceeded to the Hague, where a man named Aherne was acting as representative of Irish interests; in August they arrived at Paris, and they were soon sent to Dunkirk to join Tandy's expedition. Murphy became general secretary to Tandy, and he conducted much of his correspondence with the Directory.[2]

His friend, George Orr, was also on board the 'Anacreon.' Like Murphy, he was very tired of a life of conspiracy. There is reason to believe that he was one of the persons who had for some time been sending information to the English Government, and there appears to me no doubt that he was the author of the very curious account of Tandy's expedition which is printed in the 'Castlereagh Correspondence.'[3] Of the other members of

[1] The same names reproduce themselves with a most perplexing frequency in the Irish rebellion. George Orr must not be confused with Samuel Orr (the brother of William Orr, who was hanged), who took part in the rebellion, or with Joseph Orr, of Derry, who is mentioned in Tone's biography. His name is given in full in Murphy's statement in the I.S.P.O

[2] *Deposition of John Powell Murphy before R. Ford*, Nov. 2, 1798, I.S.P.O. Aherne's name is spelt Akerne or Akeone in this deposition; but there is a full biography of him in the I.S.P.O. in which his name is spelt as in the text

[3] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, i. 405–411. Wickham, in sending this account to Castlereagh (Oct. 25, 1798) says, that it comes from 'a person of the name of O., respecting whom I have often written to your lordship. He was on board the "Anacreon," on her late expedition to Ireland.' (See also a paper of *Secret Information*, pp. 397–399.) In the I.S.P.O. there are letters about the Tandy expedition, endorsed 'G. O.,' especially one

the expedition, the most remarkable appear to have been a certain General Rey, who had seen service in America, and Colonel Thomas Blackwell, who was adjutant-general to Tandy.

This last personage was an Irishman by birth, but he had left the country when he was only nine years old; and although he had been in the Bantry Bay expedition, he seems to have had no real interest in Irish affairs. He had been educated by the Jesuits, but had become a fierce republican, an intimate friend of Danton, a bold and reckless soldier of fortune. At a later period the British Government succeeded in accomplishing his arrest, and on the road from Sheerness to London, he talked very freely about the expedition to the officer who was in charge of him, expressing his unbounded contempt for Napper Tandy, and his disgust that an enterprise for which he cared nothing, should have prevented him from serving with the French army on the Continent.[1]

The 'Anacreon' arrived, without any serious adventure, on September 16, at the Isle of Arran, in the county of Donegal, and Napper Tandy landed at the little town of Rutland. There were no English troops nearer than Letterkenny, which was twenty-five miles distant; but the population, so far from showing the slightest disposition to welcome their liberators, generally fled from them to the mountains.[2] The French remained on shore about eight hours. Tandy distributed some absurdly inflated proclamations; hoisted an Irish flag; took formal possession of the town, and examined the newspapers and letters in the post office. He learnt from them that Humbert and all his soldiers had been captured, and that Connaught, which he expected to find in rebellion, was perfectly quiet, and he clearly saw that his only course was to return. He became so drunk while on shore, that it was found necessary to carry him to the

dated Liverpool, Oct. 21, 1799, giving a detailed account of it.

[1] Examination of Peter Perry, Bow Street officer, Nov. 5, 1799 (I.S.P.O.). There are several particulars about Blackwell in a note to the *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 284. He had saved, during the Reign of Terror, the lives of a Somersetshire gentleman (a colonel in the army) and of his daughter, who were then in France; and he married the daughter. Orr says, that Blackwell, during the voyage, 'compelled Tandy to give him first the rank of adjutant-general, and next that of general of brigade;' and that he 'had Tandy like a child in leading strings.' (*Castlereagh Correspondence*, i. 406.)

[2] See the reports of the postmaster, in Musgrave, Appendix, No. xxi.

ship, and he appears to have been in that state during most of the expedition.[1]

Through fear of the English fleet, the 'Anacreon' did not attempt to regain France. It sailed northwards by the Orkney Islands, took two small English merchant vessels—one of them after a sharp conflict—and at last arrived safely at Bergen in Norway. Murphy and Orr, who, according to their own accounts, had tried to escape when in Ireland, now succeeded in making their way to the English consul, who sent them in an American ship to England, where they disclosed everything they knew.[2] Napper Tandy and a few companions made their way to Hamburg.

Their arrival proved a great perplexity and a great calamity to that town. The English Government insisted peremptorily on their surrender, as British subjects who were in rebellion against their sovereign; while the French minister claimed them as French citizens, and threatened the most serious consequences if they were given up. The dangers of either course were very great, but Hamburg is a seaport, and England was more formidable than France upon the sea. The Emperor of Russia, who was now in alliance with England, imposed an embargo on Hamburg ships, and at last, after a long and painful hesitation, the Senate, in October 1799, surrendered Napper Tandy, and three other Irishmen, to the English. The French Directory retaliated by a letter declaring war against Hamburg, they imposed an embargo on its shipping, and they threatened still more severe measures. The Senate sent a most abject apology to Buonaparte, describing their utter helplessness, and the ruin that must have befallen their town if they had resisted, but their deputies were received with the bitterest reproaches. They had committed, they were told, a violation of the laws of hospitality,

[1] The very graphic description of his state in the *Castlereagh Correspondence* (i. 407), is fully confirmed by the account which Blackwell gave the Bow Street officer, of the landing at Rutland. 'Tandy was so drunk on that occasion, that he [Blackwell] was obliged to have him brought on board on men's shoulders.' 'Tandy was always drunk, and incapable of acting.' (Examination of Peter Perry.)

[2] Murphy says: 'When they landed in Ireland, Examinant and George Orr (who had long determined to leave the party as soon as they could) endeavoured to escape, for which Blackwell would have killed Examinant, if Tandy had not prevented him.' They arrived in England, Oct. 21, 1798. (*Deposition of John Powell Murphy*, Nov. 2, 1798.)

which 'would not have taken place among the barbarian hordes of the desert,' an act which would be their 'eternal reproach.'[1]

The three Irishmen who were surrendered with Napper Tandy were Blackwell, Morres, and Corbett. Blackwell and Corbett had both been on the 'Anacreon,' while Morres had been in a rebellious movement in the county of Tipperary.[2]

They were all imprisoned for a long period, but none of them lost their lives. Blackwell and Morres were ultimately released without trial. Corbett succeeded in escaping, and he afterwards saw much service in the French army, and became a general of brigade.[3] The Government was for some time perplexed about what to do with Napper Tandy, and his ultimate release has been ascribed to threats of reprisals by the French in the event of his execution. It appears, however, that Lord Grenville had always doubted the propriety of his arrest, and that Cornwallis strongly advocated his liberation. He described him as 'a fellow of so very contemptible a character, that no person in this country seems to care in the smallest degree about him,' and he considered it a mistake to have embroiled Hamburg with France on account of him.[4]

Tandy lay in prison till the April of 1801, when he was put on his trial. He pleaded guilty, and was sentenced to death, but was reprieved at once, and some months later was allowed to go to France, where he soon after died.[5] Perhaps the most remarkable fact in his career, is the wide and serious influence it for a short time exercised on the affairs of Europe.

We must now return to the other French expedition, which was despatched to Ireland in the autumn of 1798. It consisted

[1] *Annual Register*, 1798, pp. 101, 102; 1799, p. 274; 1800, pp. 74, 75. Adolphus, vii. 236, 237, 242.

[2] See, on these men, *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 284. Morres was a relation of Lord Frankfort, and had been in the Austrian service. Corbett was one of the undergraduates of Trinity College, who had been expelled for treason at the visitation of Lord Clare in February 1798.

[3] An interesting account of William Corbett's very brilliant career in the French service will be found in Byrne's *Memoirs*, iii. 38–47.

[4] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 142, 143. In another letter, Cornwallis says: 'Considering the incapacity of this old man to do further mischief, the mode by which he came into our hands, his long subsequent confinement, and, lastly, the streams of blood which have flowed in this island for these last three years, I am induced to request that your Grace will submit the above proposition [for his release and banishment] to his Majesty's favourable consideration.' (Ibid. p. 338. See, too, pp. 352, 353.)

[5] Ibid. p. 355; *Annual Register*, 1802, p. 369.

of a ship of the line of eighty-four guns, called the 'Hoche,' and of eight small frigates and a schooner, and it carried a military force of little less than 3,000 men. Admiral Bompard commanded the ships, and General Hardy the soldiers, and Wolfe Tone, who was now an adjutant-general in the French service, accompanied Bompard in the 'Hoche.' From the first he clearly saw that so small an expedition after the suppression of the rebellion was almost hopeless, but he declared that if the French sent even a corporal's guard to Ireland, he would accompany it, and if the expedition attained any result, a larger one, under General Kilmaine, was expected to follow it. The fleet started from Brest on September 14, and after a long, circuitous passage of twenty-three days, it reached the neighbourhood of Lough Swilly. The English, however, were not unprepared. They had much secret information, and even if this had been wanting, there was so little secrecy in the councils of the French Government, that an account of the armament had appeared in a Paris paper before its departure. On October 12, a powerful English squadron, under Sir John Warren, bore down upon the French. Though it consisted at first of only seven vessels, to which an eighth was joined in the course of the action, it had in reality a decided superiority, for four of its vessels were ships of the line. Before the battle began, Bompard, perceiving that the odds were greatly against him, strongly urged Wolfe Tone to leave the 'Hoche' for the small, fast-sailing schooner, called 'La Biche,' which had the best chance of escaping, representing to him that, in the probable event of a capture, the French would become prisoners of war, while he might be reserved for a darker fate; but Tone refused the offer. The 'Hoche' was surrounded, defended with heroic courage for at least four hours, and till it was almost sinking, and then at last it surrendered. The frigates tried to escape, but were hotly pursued, and three of them that afternoon were captured, after a very brave and obstinate defence.[1]

Owing to strong adverse winds and to its own shattered

[1] The despatches of Sir John Warren describing the action, will be found in the *Annual Register*, 1798, pp. 144–146. M. Guillon has examined the documents on the French side (*La France et l'Irlande*, pp. 408, 409). See, too, the account in Wolfe Tone's *Memoirs*, by Tone's son. The 'Hoche' is described in the French accounts as having 74, in Sir J. Warren's despatch as having 84, guns, and there are some other small discrepancies.

condition, more than a fortnight passed before the 'Hoche' was brought safely into Lough Swilly. When the prisoners were landed Wolfe Tone was immediately recognised,[1] placed in irons in Derry gaol, and then conveyed to Dublin, where he was tried by court-martial on November 10. His speech—for it can hardly be termed a defence—was frank and manly. He fully avowed the part he had taken, and disdained to shelter himself under any pretence of having aspired to mere constitutional reforms. 'From my earliest youth,' he said, 'I have regarded the connection between Ireland and Great Britain as the curse of the Irish nation, and felt convinced that, while it lasted, this country could never be free nor happy. My mind has been confirmed in this opinion by the experience of every succeeding year. . . . I designed by fair and open war to procure the separation of the two countries. For open war I was prepared; but if, instead of that, a system of private assassinations has taken place, I repeat, while I deplore it, that it is not chargeable on me. . . . In a cause like this, success is everything. Success in the eyes of the vulgar fixes its merits. Washington succeeded, and Kosciusko failed.'

He was too brave a man to fear death, and he made no attempt to avoid it, but he earnestly implored that, in consideration of his rank in the French army, he might be saved from the ignominy of the gallows, and might, like the French *émigrés*, who had been taken in arms by their countrymen, be shot by a platoon of grenadiers. The request was a reasonable and a moderate one, but it was refused, and he was sentenced to be hanged before the gaol on November 12. The night before the day appointed for his execution, he cut his throat with a penknife which he had concealed.

The wound was at first not thought to be fatal, and it was believed in Dublin that the sentence would be carried out in spite

[1] It is stated in Tone's *Memoirs* that he was recognised by Sir George Hill, at a breakfast party at Lord Cavan's (ii. 524, 525), but the story is differently told by Sir George Hill. He wrote to Cooke: 'Until this moment, such has been the stormy weather, that for two days no boat has been on shore from the "Hoche." This morning, some hundreds of the prisoners are just landed. The first man who stepped out of the boat, habited as an officer, was T. W. Tone. He recognised and addressed me instantly, with as much *sang-froid* as you might expect from his character. We have not yet ascertained any other Hibernian to be of this party. . . . Tone is sent off to Derry under a strong escort. He called himself General Smith.' (Nov. 3, I.S.P.O.) See, too, *Faulkner's Journal*, Nov. 10, 1798.

of it. His old friend Curran, however, convinced that the trial was illegal, determined to make an effort to set it aside, and hoped that, by postponing the day of execution, some mitigation might be obtained. Immediately after the sentence of the court-martial had been delivered, he tried to obtain assistance from Tone's former friends, and especially from those Catholic leaders whom he had formerly served, but he wholly failed. Men who were already suspected, feared to compromise themselves or their cause, by showing any interest in the convicted rebel, and among men who were not suspected and loyal, there was a savage, vindictive spirit, which is painful to contemplate.[1] Peter Burrowes, however, an able and honest, though somewhat eccentric, Protestant lawyer, supported him in a manner which was doubly admirable, as it was certain to injure his professional prospects, and as his own brother—the clergyman near Oulart—had been one of the first persons murdered by the Wexford rebels. When the Court of King's Bench met on the morning of the 12th, Curran appeared before it, and, while fully admitting that Tone was guilty of high treason, he represented that a court-martial had no right to try or sentence him. Ireland was not now in a state of civil war. The courts were sitting; the King's Bench was the great criminal court of the land, and as Tone had never held a commission in the army of the Crown, a military court had no cognisance of his offence. He represented that every moment was precious, as the execution was ordered for that very day, and he applied for an immediate writ of Habeas Corpus.

The objection ought to have been made before, but it was unquestionably valid, and the Chief Justice, Lord Kilwarden, had long deplored the eclipse of law which existed in Ireland with the full sanction of the Government. He at once ordered the writ to be prepared, and in the meantime sent the sheriff to the barracks to inform the provost-martial that a writ was preparing, and that the execution must not proceed. The sheriff returned with a reply that the provost-martial must obey the presiding major, and that the major must do as Lord Cornwallis ordered him. The Chief Justice, with visible emotion, ordered the sheriff to

[1] There are two singularly heartless letters on the subject in the Irish State Paper Office, one from Lord Cavan to Cooke (Nov. 7), and the other from Sir G. Hill to Cooke (Nov. 15, 1798).

return to the barracks with the writ, to take the body of Tone into custody, to take the provost-marshal and Major Sandys into custody, and to show the writ to the general in command.

There was an anxious and agitated pause, and strong fears were entertained that military law would triumph, and that the prisoner would be executed in defiance of the writ. At last, however, the sheriff returned, and stated that he had been refused admittance into the barracks, but had learnt that on the preceding night the prisoner had wounded himself dangerously, if not mortally, and that instant death would be the result of any attempt to move him. The surgeon who attended him, soon after appeared, and confirmed the report, and the Chief Justice issued an order, suspending the execution.[1] Several days of miserable, abject suffering, still lay before Wolfe Tone. He at last died of his wound, on November 19.

It would be a manifest exaggeration to call him a great man, but he had many of the qualities of mind and character by which, under favourable conditions, greatness has been achieved, and he rises far above the dreary level of commonplace which Irish conspiracy in general presents. The tawdry and exaggerated rhetoric; the petty vanities and jealousies; the weak sentimentalism; the utter incapacity for proportioning means to ends, and for grasping the stern realities of things, which so commonly disfigure the lives and conduct even of the more honest members of his class, were wholly alien to his nature. His judgment of men and things was keen, lucid, and masculine, and he was alike prompt in decision and brave in action. Coming to France without any advantage of birth, property, position or antecedents, and without even a knowledge of the language, he gained a real influence over French councils, and he displayed qualities that won the confidence and respect of such men as Carnot and Hoche, Clarke and Grouchy, Daendels and De Winter. His journals clearly show how time, and experience, and larger scenes of action, had matured and strengthened both his intellect and character. The old levity had passed away. The constant fits

[1] The report of the court-martial, and of the proceedings before the King's Bench, will be found in the *State Trials*, xxvii. 614–626. See, too, the account by Wolfe Tone's son in Tone's *Memoirs*. Mr. Dicey has made some striking remarks on this conflict between ordinary and martial law. (*Lectures on the Constitution* p. 303.)

of drunkenness that disfigured his early life no longer occur. The spirit of a mere adventurer had become much less apparent. A strong and serious devotion to an unselfish cause, had unquestionably grown up within him, and if he had become very unscrupulous about the means of attaining his end, he at least was prepared to sacrifice to it, not only his life, but also all personal vanity, pretensions, and ambition. If his dream of an independent Ireland, now seems a very mad one, it is but justice to him to remember how different was then the position of Ireland, both in relation to England and in relation to the Continent. Ireland now contains scarcely more than an eighth part of the population of the United Kingdom, and it is hopelessly divided within itself. At the time of the rebellion of 1798, the whole population of the two islands was little more than fifteen millions, and probably fully four and a half millions of these were Irish.[1] It was a much larger population than Holland possessed when she confronted the power of Lewis XIV., or the United States when they won their independence, or Prussia when Frederick the Great made her one of the foremost nations in Europe. It was idle to suppose that such a people, if they had been really united and in earnest, could not under favourable circumstances have achieved and maintained their independence; and what circumstance could seem more favourable than a great revolutionary war, which especially appealed to all oppressed nationalities, threatened the British Empire with destruction, and seemed about to lead to a complete dissolution and rearrangement of the political system of Europe?

Wiser men had warned him from the first, that he misread both the characters and the sentiments of his people, but it is

[1] In the census of 1801, the population of Great Britain was estimated at 10,942,646. The population of Ireland is more doubtful, for the first census (which was a very imperfect one) was only taken in 1813, when it was estimated at 5,937,852. In 1821 it was found to be 6,801,827. Earlier estimates are somewhat conjectural, being based chiefly on the returns of houses; but allowing for the abnormally rapid increase of population in the last decade of the century, they do not greatly disagree. Parker Bush calculated the population in 1788, at about 4,000,000. A calculation based on a return of houses, made to the Irish Parliament early in 1792, placed it at 4,206,612. Whitley Stokes, in an able pamphlet published in 1799, thought it then somewhat exceeded 4,500,000. Gordon, after a careful examination, concluded that in 1798 it was 'much nearer to five than to four millions.' Newenham, in his work on Irish population, which was published in 1805, believed it to have risen at that date to 5,395,436.

not difficult to understand the causes of his error. When he saw the rapidity with which the revolutionary doctrines had spread through the energetic, Protestant, industrial population of the North; when he remarked the part which the independent gentry had very recently taken in the volunteer movement; when he observed the many signs, both in Ireland and on the Continent, of the dissolution of old beliefs and the evanescence of sectarian passions, he easily persuaded himself that a united national movement for independence had become possible, and that the fierce spirit of democratic revolution, which was rising with the force of a new religion over Europe, must sweep away the corrupt and narrow Government of Ireland. Of the Irish Catholics, Tone knew little, but he believed that their religious prejudices had disappeared, that they would follow the lead of the intelligent Presbyterians of the North, and that they were burning to throw off the government of England. He lived to see all his illusions dispelled, and when he started on his last journey, it was with a despondency which was not far removed from hopelessness. It is not uninteresting to notice that the 'Hoche,' in which he was captured, was afterwards called the 'Donegal,' and was the ship which, under the British flag, bore a far more illustrious Irishman, Arthur Wellesley, to the scenes of his triumphs in the Spanish Peninsula.

The defeat of the fleet of Bompard closes the history of French expeditions to Ireland; but one more, alarming episode occurred. On October 27, Savary, who had commanded the French squadron which landed Humbert, reappeared in Killala Bay with four ships of war, and 2,000 soldiers. As it was not at first known that the ships were French, two officers were sent to them, and they were detained on board, and ultimately carried to France. It was believed in Killala that these ships formed part of the squadron which had been defeated by Warren, but they are now known to have formed a separate expedition, sent to ascertain whether the rebellion was in progress. On hearing that all was over, the French admiral hastily weighed anchor, and though hotly pursued by some English vessels, he succeeded in reaching France in safety.[1]

The rebellion was now virtually ended, though Joseph Holt

[1] Compare Guillon, p. 413; and Stock's *Narrative*, pp. 144–148.

succeeded, for more than three months after the rest of Leinster had been quieted, in keeping together some hundreds of rebels among the Wicklow hills, and in evading or defying all the forces of the Crown. He has himself, in his most curious autobiography, related his adventures and hairbreadth escapes. Of the men who accompanied him, some were mere robbers; many were peasants whose houses had been burnt by the yeomen, and many others were deserters from militia regiments. At one time he says he had deserters from thirteen regiments among his men;[1] and many who did not venture to desert, readily supplied him with cartridges. He had also a considerable number of the Shilmalier wild-fowl shooters, with their long guns and their deadly aim; but on the whole, like Miles Byrne, he considered the Irish rebel most terrible when he had a pike in his hand, and he gave his men such a measure of discipline, and he managed his attacks with such skill, that he made them very formidable.

Several women hung about his party, and one of them, whom he called his 'Moving Magazine,' appears to have been by far the most valuable of his followers. She was a girl named Susy Toole, the daughter of a blacksmith at Annamoe. Being accustomed to wield the sledge-hammer, she had a more than masculine strength, and she had also great natural tact, a most ready and plausible tongue, an extraordinary power of disguising her face and appearance, indomitable courage, and inflexible fidelity. Carrying a basket of gingerbread and fruit, she ranged over many miles of country, collecting the most minute and accurate knowledge about the position, movements, and intentions of every body of troops in the neighbourhood; finding out what men were wavering in their allegiance, and obtaining from them large supplies of cartridges. She seldom returned to Holt without two or three hundred cartridges concealed under her clothes, and it was chiefly owing to her information that Holt was so long able to defy his enemies, though a large reward was placed upon his head. He kept the whole county of Wicklow in constant alarm, and often made incursions into the adjoining counties. His men burnt numerous country houses, and the farmhouses of men who were obnoxious to them, drove

[1] Holt's *Memoirs*, i. 144.

herds of cattle into the mountains, levied contributions, attacked and often defeated small bodies of yeomanry or militia. Many men were also murdered as Orangemen or yeomen. The little town of Blessington, in the county of Wicklow, was captured and plundered, and Captain Hume, one of the members for the county, was killed in an unsuccessful skirmish with the rebels.

The Protestantism of Holt, as he himself states, always exposed him to suspicion among his followers, and although they recognised in him their most skilful and daring leader, his danger was by no means exclusively from the loyalists. A large body of his men, under a leader named Hacket, broke away from him because he would not permit them to carry on indiscriminate plunder. A suspicion having got abroad that he was in negotiation with General Moore, he was very nearly murdered, and at last, as the winter nights drew on, his followers, availing themselves of the amnesty which had been proclaimed, gradually dropped away.

Holt was a brave and skilful rebel leader—perhaps the most skilful who appeared in Ireland during the rebellion—but he cannot by any possibility be regarded as an Irish patriot. He has himself most candidly declared, that he was absolutely indifferent to the political questions that were supposed to be at issue in the rebellion, and that he would in fact have preferred to have been on the other side.[1] Like great numbers of his followers, he was a rebel because, having fallen under suspicion, his house had been burnt, and the mountains seemed his only refuge. The picture he gives of the barbarities on both sides, is probably drawn with no unfaithful touch. 'The scenes of cruelty I witnessed,' he says, 'at this period are beyond human belief and comprehension. . . . Many of the cruelties of the rebels were in retaliation of the previous enormities committed upon them by the yeomanry, who in their turn revenged themselves with increased acrimony, and thus all the kindlier and best feelings of humanity were eradicated. . . . Human victims were everywhere sacrificed to the demon of revenge, and their mutilated carcases exhibited with savage ferocity. . . . Many of the corps of yeomanry were a disgrace to humanity and the colour of their cloth. The rebels were not less atrocious or refined in their cruelties, but they were excited by the heads and

[1] Holt's *Memoirs*, i. 219.

hands above them, and considered their acts meritorious; few of them were really sensible of the true character of what they did. They were wild, uncultivated, ignorant creatures, whom it was difficult to control and impossible to keep in discipline when excited.' Many 'became rebels unwillingly, feeling acutely the wrongs and oppression they had suffered. They grew more like enraged tigers than men, and woe to the unhappy yeoman who fell into their power; he was instantly put to death, often by a cruel and attenuated torture. The soldiers of the regular army, in a great degree from acting with the yeomanry, caught their feelings, and indulged in cruelties with an avenging spirit, but, generally speaking, the animosity existed in the breast of the Irish peasant in its most exaggerated character against the yeomanry. The murder in cold blood of an Orangeman or yeoman, was considered by the rebels a meritorious act of justice, and that of a rebel by the loyal party as no crime. . . . Each party accused the other of cruelty and barbarous inhumanity, and the accusation on both sides was just. Each were guilty, atrociously guilty, but each justified himself with the idea that his abominable acts were but the just retaliation of previous wrongs.'[1]

Holt himself seems to have done all that was in his power to restrain his men from murder, and some conspicuous acts of clemency and generosity, as well as his great daring and skill, gave him much reputation. The Latouche family and Lord Powerscourt exerted themselves to save his life, and at last, on November 10, he surrendered himself to Lord Powerscourt, and he appears to have given some useful information to the Government.[2] He was transported to Botany Bay, but a few years later was suffered to return to Ireland.

The exultation of the triumphant party was now very great, and it took many forms. The best was an earnest desire to assist those who had suffered on the loyalist side during the rebellion. There was a vast assemblage of all that was most brilliant in Dublin society to hear Kirwan preach at St. Thomas's Church, in behalf of the widows and children of the soldiers who had fallen in fighting against the rebels. The Lord Lieutenant was present, and the principal ladies in Dublin, with Lady Clare

[1] Holt's *Memoirs*, i. 198, 210, 220, 221.

[2] Croker's preface to Holt's *Memoirs*, p. xx. *Castlereagh Correspondence*, ii. 186.

and Lady Castlereagh at their head, acted as collectors. The eloquence of the great preacher never soared to a loftier height, and his vivid picture of the state of Ireland on the eve of the rebellion, and of the passions the catastrophe had produced, is even now well worthy of perusal. 1,122*l.* was collected: 'the largest collection,' writes Bishop Percy, 'I suppose ever made at a single sermon.'[1] Parliament acted on the same lines, and a sum of 100,000*l.* was voted for those loyalists who had suffered during the rebellion.

Its thanks were also voted unanimously to the yeomanry, militia, and other troops. Castlereagh, in introducing the motion, gave the first place to the yeomen. 'Their services,' he said, 'had effected the salvation of the country.' Although they had only been intended for local service in their respective districts, they had everywhere outstripped the limits assigned to them. There was not a single corps which had not volunteered to march out of its district for the public service, and but for them the country would not have been saved. After the Irish yeomanry he placed the English militia, who, though not obliged by law to serve out of their own country, had volunteered to do so. Then came the Irish militia and fencible troops. There had been some defections among them, but the overwhelming majority had displayed great loyalty.[2]

There was a sudden rebound of confidence, and at the beginning of August the Irish funds stood higher than before the rebellion.[3] The news of the destruction of a great French fleet by Nelson at the battle of the Nile, which arrived in Ireland in the beginning of October, greatly increased the sense of security. Dublin was brilliantly illuminated, and no discordant note appears to have jarred on the general delight.[4] At the same time, all those sectarian anniversaries which had of late years been falling gradually into desuetude, were galvanised into a new vitality, and the now hated colour of Orange was everywhere paraded as the distinctive badge of loyalty. On the anniversary of the battle of the Boyne, it was stated that upwards of 12,000 orange cockades were worn in the streets of

[1] Bishop Percy's letter to his wife, July 9, 1798. *Faulkner's Journal*, July 10, 1798. Kirwan's sermon is in the volume of his sermons, printed in 1814.

[2] *Faulkner's Journal*, Oct. 6, 1798.

[3] Ibid. Aug. 9, 1798.

[4] Ibid. Oct. 6, 1798.

Dublin, and the great majority of the houses were decorated with orange lilies.[1] The religious service of October 23, commemorating the outbreak of the great rebellion of 1641, had of late years been little used; but in 1798, it was resolved to observe it with great solemnity in the churches, and there were even proposals, which were happily not persisted in, that another prayer should be inserted in the Liturgy, to thank the Almighty for having delivered the loyal people of Ireland from another sanguinary conspiracy.[2] The usual official ceremonies on the birthday of William III., were accompanied in 1798 by an enthusiasm which had certainly not been equalled for a century. The yeomanry, decorated with orange colours, assembled round the statue of King William, and fired their *feu de joie*. The Lord Lieutenant, the Lord Mayor and the sheriffs, with a vast train accompanying them, paraded round Stephen's Green and College Green, while the cannon thundered, and the church bells rang a triumphant peal. The pedestal and railing of the statue of William had been painted afresh. A cincture of orange and green ribbons encircled the head of the great king. His shoulders were ornamented with a rich orange sash with shining tassels. His horse had orange reins; orange and blue ribbons hung from its saddle, and beneath its feet lay a green silk scarf tied with pale yellow ribbons, the emblem of the revolutionary union, which had now been trampled in the dust.[3] The loyalist song, with its refrain, 'Down, down, croppies, lie down,' was now the favourite tune, and it kindled in many a rebel breast a savage, though silent rage. Bishop Percy mentions a poor blind woman, who tried to make a livelihood by singing it through the streets of Dublin. She was soon found lying murdered in a dark alley.[4]

The savage spirit on both sides was indeed little, if at all, diminished. At the end of July, Cornwallis spoke of 'the numberless murders that are hourly committed by our people, without any process or examination whatever,'[5] and even after

[1] *Saunders's Newsletter*, July 4, 1798.

[2] See *Faulkner's Journal*, Aug. 11, Oct. 18, 1798.

[3] See the graphic description in *Faulkner's Journal*, Nov. 6, 1798.

[4] Bishop Percy to his wife, Aug. 7, 1798. Mr. Fitzpatrick notices the riots that took place about this time at Astley's Circus, on account of this tune. (*Ireland before the Union*, p. 83.)

[5] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, ii. 369.

the stringent measures of Cornwallis and of some of the general officers to maintain discipline, there were several scandalous instances of yeomen or militiamen having deliberately shot amnestied rebels who had received protections from the Government. In one infamous case, a soldier who had clearly acted in this way was acquitted of malicious intent, by a court-martial presided over by Lord Enniskillen. Cornwallis indignantly expressed his dissent from the verdict, dissolved the court-martial with a strong rebuke to its president, and directed that a new court-martial should be summoned, on which no officer who had been on the preceding one should sit. This case was but one of many, illustrating the utter want of discipline and the total disregard for human life that prevailed,[1] and it is a shameful and astonishing fact, that the conduct of Lord Cornwallis produced the most violent indignation in the ultra-loyal party, and was strongly disapproved of by no less a person than Lord Camden.[2] Crime produced crime. Murders of loyal men, or nightly outrages on their property, were regularly followed by explosions of military licentiousness, in which houses and chapels were burnt, and innocent men not infrequently killed. I have mentioned, that at least forty chapels were burnt in the province of Leinster, and it is a horrible illustration of the state of the country, that by far the greater number of these were burnt some time after the capture of Wexford and of Vinegar Hill, and when serious organised

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, ii. 419–422. See, too, a debate in the House of Commons about a man named Fenton, who had most deliberately shot a protected rebel. (*Faulkner's Journal*, Aug. 16, 1798.)

[2] He wrote to Castlereagh: 'The ends of justice would have been completely answered by a disapprobation of the sentence, was the case perfectly clear; and the warmest advocate for discipline must have been satisfied with the farther step of dissolving the court-martial; but to add, that no member who had sat on that court-martial should be chosen for the future ones, is very severe. . . . How long is it, my dear Lord C., since *we* ordered an exclusive armament of supplementary yeomen in the North, and of Mr. Beresford's corps in Dublin? How many months have elapsed since we could *not decidedly* trust any bodies of men, but those who are now so highly disapproved of? That the violence of some of the partisans of the Protestant interest should be repressed, I believe you know, I sincerely think; but that a condemnation of them should take place will infinitely hurt the English interest in Ireland. . . . The great question of union will be hurt by this measure, as, however *unjustly*, it will indispose, I fear, a very important party to whatever seems to be a favourite measure of Government.' (*Castlereagh Correspondence*, i. 425, 426.) Lord Enniskillen seems to have shown more moderation under Cornwallis's censure, than his advisers. See *Auckland Correspondence*, iv. 67; *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 193.

resistance had almost wholly ceased.[1] As late as the January of 1799, a gentleman from Gorey sent to Colonel Blaquiere a terrible account of the outrages that had been perpetrated in that country. In the preceding November, he says, a party of Ballaghkeen cavalry and of Hunter Gowan's yeomen had, without visible provocation, burnt more than nine houses in a single night. Six weeks later some cavalry were searching for robbers, when shots were fired from a house, a sergeant was killed, and another soldier wounded. The house was at once burnt down, and soon after the yeomen, at the burial of their comrade, agreed to take signal vengeance. That night they burnt two chapels, they burnt and plundered a priest's house and nine other houses spread over an area of six miles, and killed a man and woman. 'The people will not go to Gorey to prosecute,' adds the writer. 'I request my name to be kept secret, as a gentleman of this neighbourhood has been, and is yet, in continual fear of his life for forwarding a prosecution against a yeoman for night murder.'[2]

How far these statements would have stood the test of a judicial examination, I am not able to say; but whatever elements of doubt or exaggeration may cling to particular instances, the broad features of the story are but too evident. A reign of terror prevailed over the counties which had been desolated by the rebellion, for months after armed resistance had ceased, and in spite of some serious efforts to repress it, military licence was almost supreme. 'This country,' wrote Cornwallis at the very end of September, 'is daily becoming more disturbed. Religious animosities increase, and, I am sorry to say, are encouraged by the foolish violence of all the principal persons who have been in the habit of governing this island; and the Irish militia, from their repeated misbehaviour in the field, and their extreme licentiousness, are fallen into such universal contempt and abhorrence, that when applications are made for the protection of troops, it is often requested that Irish militia may not be sent.'[3]

This condition is not surprising. Men who had been hastily

[1] See the dates of these acts, in Madden, i. 349, 350.

[2] A. Brownrigg (Gorey) to Colonel Blaquiere, Jan. 17, 1799, I.S.P.O.; compare Plowden, ii. 785, 786.

[3] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, ii. 414, 415.

embodied in a time of great public danger, and who had never been subject to real military discipline, had been for a long period exposed to influences that would have demoralised the best troops. Free quarters, martial law, and the system of arbitrary house-burning and flogging, sanctioned by the Government and covered by parliamentary Acts of indemnity, had very naturally destroyed all their respect for law and property, while the many horrors of the rebellion, and the sectarian passions which it had inflamed, had as naturally given their licentiousness a deep tinge of fierceness. The officers appear to have been worse than the men. Like most things in Ireland, militia appointments had been constantly made electioneering jobs, intended to promote the political interests of leading politicians,[1] and a power which was, in the existing state of Ireland, tremendously great, was largely entrusted to the class of dissipated squireens, to the idle, drunken, insolent, uneducated middlemen, who were one of the worst elements in Irish life. I have already described the manner in which the enormous and sudden increase of farming profits, through the high price of corn, had been followed by a vast growth of land jobbing and sub-letting, which raised many suddenly to comparative wealth, enabled numbers who had formerly been working farmers to live an idle life, and thus largely increased a class which had for some years been diminishing. In counties where the great proprietors were absentees, and where there were few resident gentry, such men were often made justices of peace, and they were especially conspicuous among the yeomanry and militia officers.[2] With all their faults, they were abundantly provided with

[1] R. Griffith to Pelham, Sept. 6, 1798. (*Pelham MSS.*)

[2] 'Only a proportion of the captains, and none of the subalterns, of Irish militia, are gentlemen, and everyone knows what a brute the uneducated son of an Irish farmer or middleman is. . . . The captains cheat the men; both they and the subalterns make themselves hated and despised by them. . . . In short, if you except the field officers, and a certain small number of officers of lower rank, you may say of the Irish militia, that there is neither honour amongst the officers, nor subordination and discipline in the regiments. . . . But, notwithstanding all this, I should be very happy to command, on any occasion, a regiment composed of Irish militia *soldiers*, put into a good old skeleton regiment of the line. I know the Irish nation, and well know the Irish army, and I am convinced, that with good officers and discipline, and a little experience, it would be as fine an army and as loyal as any the King or his ancestors ever had.' (Colonel Crawford to Wickham, Nov. 19, 1798, R.O.)

courage,[1] and their sporting tastes and unsettled habits gave them a natural inclination to military life. During the struggle of the rebellion they rendered real service; but in the hideous military licence that followed, all their worst qualities appeared.

Drunkenness, as in all such periods, had greatly increased, and the contagion of military licence speedily infected the best troops. Letter after letter came to the Government, representing the extreme danger of the demoralisation of the very choicest English regiments if they remained longer in Ireland. One distinguished officer of the Guards, who was quartered at Waterford, wrote that in that town every second house was a whisky shop, and that he doubted whether the efficiency of his own regiment could be maintained six months longer in such a moral atmosphere. As for the Irish militia, he said: 'Friends or foes are all the same to them, and they will plunder indiscriminately, advancing or retreating, and from what I have heard, no effort is made to restrain them. The dread the inhabitants have of the presence of a regiment of militia, is not to be told. They shut up their shops, hide whatever they have, and, in short, all confidence is lost wherever they make their appearance.'[2]

Castlereagh at this time thought that there was little to be feared in Ireland from disaffection, but much from insubordination and religious animosities, and from the disposition to plunder which free quarters had engendered.[3] Cornwallis hated everything about him, and expressed his disgust and his despair in the strongest and most violent terms. Nine-tenths of the people of Ireland, he believed, were thoroughly disaffected. The militia would be perfectly useless in the event of a serious

[1] Miss Edgeworth has given a vivid description of these 'middlemen who re-let the lands, and live upon the produce, not only in idleness, but in insolent idleness. This kind of half-gentry, or mock-gentry, seemed to consider it as the most indisputable privilege of a gentleman not to pay his debts. They were ever ready to meet civil law with military brag-of-war. Whenever a swaggering debtor of this species was pressed for payment, he . . . ended by offering to give, instead of the value of his bond or promise, "the *satisfaction* of a gentleman, at any hour or place." Thus they put their promptitude to hazard their worthless lives, in place of all merit. . . . It certainly was not easy to do business with those whose best resource was to settle accounts by wager of battle.' (*Life of R. L. Edgeworth*, ii. 120, 121. See, too, a striking passage on the power acquired by this class, pp. 184, 185.)

[2] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, i. 341–343.

[3] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, ii 406.

invasion, and the small party who had long governed the country through the support of the British Government, were at bitter enmity with both the papists and the Presbyterians.[1]

An immediate question of great difficulty was, what to do with the crowd of prisoners who had lain untried in the gaols, many of them for several months, some of them for as much as two years. A large number were well known to the Government to be deeply implicated in the conspiracy, though there was no evidence which could be produced in court. The Amnesty Act, which was passed in 1798, in favour of rebels who surrendered their arms and returned to their allegiance, excluded not only murderers and deserters, but also all persons who had been in custody for treason since the beginning of 1795, or who had conspired with the King's enemy to bring about an invasion, or who had been members of the governing committees of the United Irish conspiracy, or who had been attainted in the present session by Parliament, or convicted by court-martial since May 24; and it also excluded by name about thirty persons who were, for the most part, on the Continent.[2] All these could only obtain pardon by particular acts of royal favour. The compact of the Government with the imprisoned leaders gave rise to much difficulty, and to long, bitter, and most wearisome recriminations. Before the secret examinations had been

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, ii. 413–415, 418. Compare the sentiments of one of the most prominent members of that 'small party.' 'Be assured,' Beresford wrote to Auckland, 'that the whole body of the lower order of Roman Catholics of this country are totally inimical to the English Government; that they are under the influence of the lowest and worst class of their priesthood; that all the extravagant and horrid tenets of that religion are as deeply engraven in their hearts as they were a century ago, or three centuries ago, and that they are as barbarous, ignorant, and ferocious as they were then; and if ministers imagine they can treat with such men, just as they would with the people of Yorkshire if they rebelled, they will find themselves mistaken. Again, the Dissenters are another set of enemies to British Government. They are greatly under the influence of their clergy also, and are taught from their cradles to be republicans; but their religion—which is as fierce as their politics—forbids them to unite with the Catholics; and to that, in a great measure, is owing that we were not all destroyed in this rebellion; for I believe, that if the Wexford people had not broken out so early into horrid acts of massacre, as they did, the North would have risen, and who knows what the event might have been? . . . The Church of England men are all loyal subjects to the King, and true to the British connection, but their minds at present are inflamed to a great degree of animosity against the papists; and this is one reason why the latter so reluctantly submit to any acts of lenity held out by the Government.' (*Beresford Correspondence*, ii. 169, 170.)

[2] 38 Geo. III. c. 55.

published by the Government, extracts from them appeared in the newspapers, and a report is said to have gone abroad, that the prisoners had revealed the names of their fellow-conspirators. The State prisoners, after the agreement had been made, though not released, were allowed great latitude, and O'Connor, Emmet, and McNevin now availed themselves of their liberty to have the following advertisement inserted in the newspapers: 'Having read in the different newspapers, publications pretending to be abstracts of the report of the Secret Committee of the House of Commons, and of our depositions before the Committees of the Lords and Commons, we feel ourselves called upon to assure the public that they are gross, and to us astonishing, misrepresentations, not only not supported by, but in many instances directly contradictory to, the facts we really stated on those occasions. We further assure our friends, that in no instance did the name of any individual escape us; on the contrary, we always refused answering such questions as might tend to implicate any person whatever, conformably to the agreement entered into by the State prisoners and the Government.'

The appearance of this advertisement extremely exasperated the Government. One of their main motives in making a treaty with men who were immeasurably more guilty than nine-tenths of those who had been shot or hanged, was to obtain from them such an acknowledgment of their conspiracy with France, as would exercise a decisive influence on opinion; and although the extracts that had been published in the newspapers consisted of only a selection of some incriminating parts of their admissions, it has never been shown that they were inaccurate. The advertisement, it was said, was obviously drawn up for the purpose of destroying the moral effect of these admissions, casting discredit and doubt upon the whole report, and encouraging the conspirators who were still at large; and it was published immediately after the news had arrived of the landing of a French expedition in Connaught, and when there was, in consequence, grave danger of the rebellion being rekindled. In the House of Commons the sentiments of the Government were fully echoed, and by no one more powerfully than by Plunket, who represented the small party still adhering to the views of Grattan.

He described the advertisement as 'a species of proclamation or manifesto, couched in the most libellous and insolent language, and proceeding from three men who were signal instances of the royal mercy, . . . urging to rebellion and to the aid of a French invasion, calling upon their friends to cast from them all fear of having been detected in their treasons, and to prosecute anew their machinations.'[1] Some men even maintained that the compact had been broken, and that the prisoners should be tried by martial law. The Government, however, acted more moderately. The State prisoners, to their great indignation, were now subjected to strict confinement, and by the direction of Pitt himself, those who had signed the advertisement were re-examined before the Committee, and obliged to acknowledge the truth of their former evidence. It is but justice to them to say, that they did this without difficulty.[2]

They had more reason to complain of the terms of an Act which was subsequently passed, depriving them of the right of returning, when banished, to the King's dominions, or going to any country at war with the King. The preamble described them as men 'who, being conscious of their flagrant and enormous guilt, have expressed their contrition for the same, and have most humbly implored his Majesty's mercy . . . to grant his royal pardon to them on condition of their being transported, banished, or exiled.'[3] It would be impossible to describe less felicitously or less truly their attitude, and Neilson wrote a letter indignantly denying that they had either acknowledged their guilt, retracted their opinions, or implored pardon. It is stated that he was only restrained from publishing his protest by the threat, that in that case the Government would consider the whole treaty as cancelled, and send all the prisoners to trial.[4]

Another difficulty speedily followed. The first intention had been to send the State prisoners to America, but Portland considered that, by the law of nations, powers at amity have not a

[1] There is only a newspaper report of Plunket's speech (reproduced by Madden, iii. 75); but it is sufficient to show the falsehood of McNevin's statement, that Plunket advocated the summary execution of the signers of the advertisement. (*Pieces of Irish History*, p. 162.)

[2] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, ii 390, 391, 399, 403; *Castlereagh Correspondence*, i. 329, 330, 336, 337; Madden's *United Irishmen*, iii. 56, 57, 74–76; McNevin's *Pieces of Irish History*, pp. 160–163; Plowden, ii. 805, 806.

[3] 38 Geo. III. c. 78.

[4] See O'Connor's *Letter to Lord Castlereagh*.

right to transport to each other, without permission, such of their subjects as had committed crimes, and it was soon found that the American Government had not the smallest intention of giving this permission. Rufus King, the American minister in London, officially announced that the President, under the powers given him by a recent Act, would not suffer any of the traitors from Ireland to land in America, and that if they set foot on shore, he would instantly have them sent back to Europe.[1]

In a reply that King subsequently wrote to the remonstrances of an Irishman, there is a passage justifying this decision, which is so curious, as showing the part which Irish immigrants had already begun to play in American politics, that it is deserving of a full quotation. 'In common with others,' he wrote, 'we have felt the influence of the changes that have successively taken place in France, and unfortunately a portion of our inhabitants have erroneously supposed that our civil and political institutions, as well as our national policy, might be improved by a close imitation of France. This opinion, the propagation of which was made the duty, and became the chief employment, of the French agents residing among us, created a more considerable division among our people, and required a greater watchfulness and activity from the Government, than could beforehand have been apprehended. I am sorry to make the remark . . . that a large proportion of the emigrants from Ireland, and especially in the Middle States, have, upon this occasion, arranged themselves on the side of the malcontents. I ought to except from this remark, most of the enlightened and well-educated Irishmen who reside among us, and, with a few exceptions, I might confine it to the indigent and illiterate, who, entertaining an attachment to freedom, are unable to appreciate those salutary restraints, without which it degenerates into anarchy. It would be injustice to say, that the Irish emigrants are more national than those of other countries, yet, being a numerous though very minor portion of our population, they are capable, from causes it is needless now to explain, of being generally brought to act in concert, and under artful leaders

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, ii. 425, 430; *Castlereagh Correspondence*, i. 394–396.

may be, as they have been, enlisted in mischievous combinations against our Government.'[1]

The result of the attitude of the American Government was, that the leading members of the conspiracy still remained in confinement for considerably more than three years. A proposal which they made to go to Germany was not accepted,[2] and the Duke of Portland peremptorily directed that they should be kept in strict custody. In the beginning of December, the determination of the Government was formally announced by a written message, which stated that fifteen of their number could not be liberated at present, though the other State prisoners named in the Banishment Bill would be permitted to retire to any neutral country on the Continent, on giving security not to pass into an enemy's country. The Lord Lieutenant expressed his regret 'that a change of circumstances' had rendered this precaution necessary, and his determination to extend a similar indulgence to the prisoners now excepted, as soon as it was consistent with the public safety.

It is not, I think, necessary to enter in detail into the long and angry controversy that ensued. O'Connor and his fellow-prisoners contended, that their continued detention after they had fulfilled their part of the compact, was a breach of faith to men who were untried and unconvicted, and that the Government were bound in honour to permit them at once to emigrate to the Continent. Castlereagh, on the other hand, had from the beginning stated that the Government had reserved a full discretion of retaining the prisoners in custody, as long as the war should last, provided their liberation was deemed inconsistent with the public safety.[3] The excepted prisoners in Dublin, as well as a few from Belfast, were soon after removed to Fort St. George, in Inverness-shire in Scotland, where some of them remained till the middle of 1802. It is worthy of special notice, that of the twenty prisoners who were selected for confinement

[1] McNevin's *Pieces of Irish History*, p. 236. This letter was written to Henry Jackson, Aug. 23, 1799.

[2] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, ii. 426.

[3] Compare the *Castlereagh Correspondence*, i. 350, with the accounts of the three leading United Irishmen, which are given in McNevin's *Pieces of Irish History*, and in Madden. The paper signed by the seventy-three State prisoners says nothing about the time of their release, but simply states their readiness 'to emigrate to such country as shall be agreed on between them and the Government.' See Arthur O'Connor's *Letter to Lord Castlereagh*, p. 10.

in this fortress on account of the prominent part they had taken in organising the conspiracy, ten were nominal members of the Established Church, six were Presbyterians, and only four were Catholics.[1]

Few men can have had a loftier opinion of their own merits than O'Connor, Emmet, and McNevin, and they have written with burning indignation the account of their wrongs. At the same time, the fate of these leading conspirators, who endured a long, but by no means severe, imprisonment, and were afterwards exiled to the Continent or to America, was a very different one from that of multitudes of humbler men, who were probably far less guilty. A stream of Irish political prisoners was poured into the penal settlement of Botany Bay, and they played some part in the early history of the Australian colonies, and especially of Australian Catholicism. In November 1796, Governor Hunter wrote home complaining of the turbulent and seditious disposition of a large number of Irish Defenders who had been sent out in the two preceding years; but he acknowledged that they had one very real grievance, for neither the date of their conviction nor the length of their sentence was known in Australia. In September 1800, Governor King announced that the seditious spirit among the Irish political convicts had risen to 'a very great height,' and had been much fostered by a priest who was among them. He adds, that the number of rebels who had been sent from Ireland since the late disturbances in that country, was 235, exclusive of the Defenders sent out in 1794; that there were now about 450 Irish convicts in the colony, but that some of them were ordinary felons. In the spring of 1801, attempts at insurrection were made; pikes were discovered, and the governor complained that 135 new convicts had just arrived from Cork, 'of the most desperate and diabolical characters that could be selected throughout that kingdom, together with a Catholic priest of most notorious seditious and rebellious principles.' There were now, he said, not less than 600 avowed and unrepentant United Irishmen among the convicts. A year later he repeated his complaint, urging that if seditious republicans continued to be sent, the colony would soon be composed of few other characters; and, in May 1803, he writes that 'the list of fourteen men condemned lately to

[1] Dickson's *Narrative*, pp. 112, 116.

die was caused by one of those unhappy events that happen more or less on the importation of each cargo of Irish convicts.' In 1804, his warnings were justified by a serious Irish rebellion in New South Wales, which was not suppressed without some bloodshed. It is curious to notice how beneath the Southern Cross, as in every disturbance at home, the familiar figure of the Irish informer at once appeared. An old Irish rebel, who declared that he had suffered so much by rebellion that he would never again be implicated in it, gave the first information of the designs of the conspirators.[1]

The political prisoners in New South Wales were usually men who had been convicted under the Insurrection Act or by courts-martial, and many of them were men who had been condemned to death, but whose sentences had been commuted. Other prisoners were permitted to serve in the army and navy. It was intended that these forced recruits should serve only in the dangerous climates of the West Indies, but they gradually percolated all branches of the service, and their possible influence was a cause of some anxiety, both to the civil and military authorities.[2] It appears that, at the end of October 1798, about 300 political prisoners were in confinement in the different gaols of Ireland, in addition to the eighty who were banished by Act of Parliament.[3] The Government was soon afterwards relieved of the embarrassment, in a somewhat unexpected way. A message came in January 1799 from the King of Prussia, offering to take able-bodied Irish rebels

[1] I have taken these facts from Mr. James Bonwick's very interesting little work, called *First Twenty Years of Australia*, pp. 53–66. Mr. Bonwick states, that three Catholic priests were among the Irish convicts, and that a Protestant clergyman, named Henry Fulton, who was transported on account of his participation in the rebellion of 1798, became one of the most prominent and useful clergymen in New South Wales, and a warm friend of the governor. Thomas Muir, the Scotch Jacobin, unlike most of his party, was a sincere Christian, and employed himself much in distributing Scripture extracts among the convicts.

[2] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, i. 343. Some time before the insurrection had broken out, Portland begged that Irish seditious prisoners might not be brought to the English ports, 'because we are wholly unprepared for their reception, and the army is in general full as little inclined as the navy, to admit persons of that description into any of their corps. . . . As to their being sent to the corps in Botany Bay, this mode of disposing of them, appears to me certainly not less exceptionable, than that of placing them in the 60th Regiment.' (Portland to Camden, July 3, 1797, I.S.P.O.)

[3] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, ii. 424–426.

who were fit and willing to serve as privates in the Prussian army. The offer was gladly accepted. A Prussian officer, named Schonler, came over to Ireland to select the recruits, and on September 8 of that year a transport sailed from Waterford for Emden, bearing 318 Irishmen to the Continent.[1]

When Cornwallis first came to Ireland, Bishop Percy described him as very civil and pleasant, but added, 'he will not be a favourite here, for he is very sober himself, and does not push the bottle. They also think him too merciful to the rebels.'[2] The prediction was fully verified, and the outcries against 'the ruinous system of lenity' of the Lord Lieutenant, were long and loud among the supporters of the Government. Clare, who had at first taken a different course, very soon subscribed to the condemnation. He maintained that Cornwallis had 'much mistaken the nature of the people, in supposing that they were to be brought back to submission by a system nearly of indiscriminate impunity for the most enormous offences,' that he had exasperated the loyal, and encouraged the rebels, and that nothing but a severe and terrible lesson would ever put a stop to rebellion and outrage in Ireland. He quoted with some felicity a passage from General Tarleton's History of the American campaigns of 1780 and 1781, in which Cornwallis was represented as having pursued a similar policy in South Carolina, in hopes of giving offence to neither party, and having by his mistaken lenity greatly encouraged and strengthened, without in any degree conciliating, the disloyal, while he at once discouraged and exasperated those who had been ruined by their attachment to the Crown.[3]

[1] A number of letters about this transaction will be found in the I.S.P.O. Miles Byrne declares that the deported Irish were compelled to work for years in the Prussian mines. (See Byrne's *Memoirs*, iii. 163, 164.)

[2] Bishop Percy to his wife, July 30, 1798.

[3] *Auckland Correspondence*, iv. 70, 71. The following curious extract from a private letter gives a vivid picture of the state of feeling. 'His Excellency is held in very little respect. The length of time he took to beat Humbert, his subsequent alleged disregard to the rebels in Connaught, his thirty-days' permission to them to cut the Protestants' throats, his orders to the army to retire to the interior on the approach of an invading enemy; his putting the yeomanry off permanent duty in the county of Wicklow; his alleged neglect of the late outrages in Wexford and Kildare; his system of mercy to the rebels, contrasted with his severe sentence of censure on Wollaghan's court-martial—are universally brought in charge against him in all companies, as indicating a determination on his part to render the kingdom, upon system, uncomfortable to the Protestants, and thereby to force them to become the solicitors for an union.

It is true that the system of government under Lord Cornwallis was less sanguinary than under Lord Camden; but an extract from a private letter of Castlereagh to Wickham, in the March of 1799, will probably be, to most persons, quite sufficient to acquit it of any excess in lenity. Nearly 400 persons, Castlereagh says, had been already tried under Lord Cornwallis. Of these, 131 were condemned to death, and 81 were executed. 'This forms but a proportion of the number of victims to public justice, for acts of treason and rebellion in the disturbed districts. Numbers were tried and executed by order of the general officers, whose cases never came before the Lord Lieutenant, and it appears by the inclosed return from the Clerk of the Crown, that 418 persons were banished or transported by sentences of courts-martial. . . . Since Lord Cornwallis's arrival, exclusive of the infliction of punishment by military tribunals, great numbers were convicted at the autumn assizes.' [1]

Of the total loss of life during the rebellion, it is impossible to speak with any kind of certainty. The estimates on the subject are widely different, and almost wholly conjectural. Madden, the most learned of the apologists of the United Irishmen, pretends that not less than 70,000 persons must have perished in Ireland, during the two months' struggle; [2] but Newenham, who was a contemporary writer, singularly free from party passion and prejudice, and much accustomed to careful statistical investigations, formed a far more moderate estimate. He calculated that the direct loss during the rebellion was about 15,000. About 1,600, he says, of the King's troops, and about 11,000 of the rebels, fell in the field. About 400 loyal persons were massacred or assassinated, and 2,000 rebels were exiled or hanged.[3] The most horrible feature was the great number of

The devil of this language is, that it is chiefly held by the most approved friends of Government.' (Sir G. Hill to Cooke, November 15, 1798.)

[1] Castlereagh to Wickham (private), March 6, 1799. (Record Office.)

[2] Madden's *United Irishmen*, i. 353. He says, 20,000 of the King's troops and 50,000 of the people perished.

[3] Newenham, *On Irish Population*, p. 131. Alexander Marsden, who held a very confidential post under the Irish Government, wrote: 'There have not less than 20,000 persons fallen in this conflict, which for the time was carried on with great inveteracy. It was a desperate remedy, but the country will now be in a much more secure state than before.' (A. Marsden to Messrs. Goldsmid, Aug. 4, 1798, I.S.P.O.)

helpless, unarmed men, who were either deliberately murdered by the rebels, or shot down by the troops. 'For several months,' writes Mary Leadbeater, 'there was no sale for bacon cured in Ireland, from the well-founded dread of the hogs having fed upon the flesh of men.'[1]

Of the loss of property, it is equally difficult to speak with accuracy. The claims sent in by the suffering loyalists amounted to 823,517*l.*; 'but who,' writes Gordon, 'will pretend to compute the damages of the croppies, whose houses were burned, and effects pillaged and destroyed, and who, barred from compensation, sent in no estimate to the commissioners?' And, in addition to this, we must remember the enormously increased military expenditure, which was imposed upon the country, and the terrible shock that was given, both to industry and to credit.[2]

The double burden, indeed, of foreign war, and of internal convulsion, was fast weighing down the finances of Ireland, which had, a few years before, been so sound and prosperous; and although the increase of debt seemed small compared with that of England, and was much exceeded in Ireland in the years that followed the Union, it was sufficiently rapid to justify very grave apprehensions. When the war broke out, the Irish national debt was 2,344,314*l.*[3] At the end of 1797, the funded debt had risen to 9,485,756*l.*, of which 6,196,316*l.* was owed to England, and it was computed that the expenditure of the country exceeded its income by about 2,700,000*l.*[4] The terrible months that followed, greatly aggravated the situation. Between December 1797 and August 1798, Ireland borrowed no less than 4,966,666*l.*, nearly all of it at more than 6 per cent., and a large proportion at more than 7 per cent.[5]

This was a grievous evil, but, at the same time, the great spring of national prosperity was not yet seriously impaired. A country which is essentially agricultural, will flourish when agriculture is prosperous, even in spite of very serious and sanguinary convulsions. In the height of the struggle, Beresford

[1] *Leadbeater Papers*, i. 247.

[2] Compare Gordon's *History of the Rebellion*, pp. 202, 203; Musgrave, p. 636; Newenham's *State of Ireland*, pp. 274, 275.

[3] Vol. vi. p. 434.

[4] See a letter of Beresford to Auckland. (*Beresford Correspondence*, ii. 161.)

[5] Ibid. pp. 167, 168.

wrote that it was 'most strange and extraordinary,' that the revenue every week was rising in a degree that had been hitherto unknown.[1] The moral scars left by the rebellion were deep and indelible, and it changed the whole character of Irish life, but the material devastation rapidly disappeared. There were large districts, it is true, where, owing to the destruction of houses, and the neglect or ruin of agriculture, extreme misery prevailed, but the harvest of 1798 was a very good one, and this fact did more than any measures of politicians to appease the country. In August, Clare noticed the rich corn crops that were ripening over the rebel districts through which he passed, and he observed that the common people were everywhere returning to their ordinary occupations.[2]

There was one ignoble task, in which the Government and many of those who blamed the Government for its lenity, were fully agreed. It was in doing all that lay in their power to blacken the character of the man who, since the death of Burke, was by far the greatest of living Irishmen. The savage assaults that, in the last half of 1798, were directed against the character of Grattan, form one of the most shameful incidents of this shameful time. In some respects, indeed, they had the motive of self-defence. The Fitzwilliam episode had so visibly and so largely contributed to the calamities of the last few years, that it was very necessary for those who had brought about the recall of Lord Fitzwilliam and the reversal of his policy, if they desired to exculpate themselves from a terrible weight of responsibility, to represent his appointment and policy as the main source of the evil. Catholic emancipation and parliamentary reform had been the first avowed objects of the United Irishmen, and long before the United Irish conspiracy had arisen, Grattan had been their most powerful advocate. He had opposed some parts of the coercive legislation of the Government; he had constantly denounced the acts of military and Orange violence which had been so largely practised with their approval or connivance, and he had committed the still more deadly offence of predicting only too faithfully the consequences that would follow from them. It is true, that he had exerted all his eloquence and influence in opposition to French democracy; that he had never

[1] *Auckland Correspondence*, iii. 442. [2] Ibid. iv. 37.

failed to urge that democracy of any kind would be ruinous to Ireland; that he had shown in every possible way, and on every occasion, the depth of his conviction that Great Britain and Ireland must stand or fall together; that he had uniformly taught the people, that no reform was likely to do them good which was not constitutionally effected with the support of their gentry and through the medium of their Parliament; that the United Irish movement was essentially a revolt against his teaching and authority, and that it had brought about the almost total destruction of his influence. All this was incontestably true, but in the fierce reaction against Liberal ideas, it is perhaps not wonderful that the tide should have run furiously against the man who had been for many years their greatest representative in Ireland.

A long and extremely scurrilous attack upon Grattan, and his whole life and policy, had been written by Dr. Duigenan in 1797, in reply to the address which Grattan had published when he seceded from Parliament. It had been sent over to London, and refused by a publisher, but it appeared in Dublin immediately after the suppression of the rebellion. In general the writings and speeches of Duigenan, though they contained a good deal of curious learning, neither received, nor deserved, much attention, but this work so exactly fell in with the dominant spirit of the moment, that it speedily ran through at least five editions. A reader who is exempt from the passions of that time, would find it difficult to conceive a grosser or more impudent travesty of history. The calamities that had befallen Ireland, in the opinion of Duigenan, were mainly due to two men, Burke and Grattan. Burke was essentially a Romanist, and passionately devoted to the interests of popery, and the main object of all his later policy had been to overturn the Protestant Establishment in Ireland, and to substitute popery in its room. 'Whether Mr. Burke had, at the time he formed his project of establishing popery in Ireland, entertained it only as a step towards the separation of Ireland from the British Empire, is not quite clear, though his strong attachment to republican principles during the American war gives good ground for suspecting him of such a design.' In the earlier part of his career, Burke had contributed as much as any man in England to the separation of

America from the mother country, and it was very probably the success of the American rebellion that encouraged him to undertake his Irish enterprise. It is true that he afterwards 'changed, or affected to change, all his former opinions in favour of republicanism,' but the explanation was very evident. It was because the French Revolution had proved hostile to popery.

But if there was some ambiguity about the motives of Burke, those of Grattan were abundantly clear. According to this veracious chronicler, the steady object which inspired all his acts and all his speeches ever since the American War, was the separation of Ireland from the British Empire. Ambition and avarice were his guiding motives; coalitions between republican infidels and popish bigots were his chosen means. All this was developed in a strain of the coarsest invective. A passage from the Psalms was selected as the motto, and it was the key-note of the whole book. 'Thy tongue imagineth wickedness, and with lies thou cuttest like a sharp razor. Thou hast loved unrighteousness more than goodness, and to talk of lies more than righteousness. Thou hast loved to speak all words that may do hurt, oh thou false tongue!'

Such was the book which suddenly rose to popularity in Ireland, which was spoken of with delight in ministerial circles, and was eulogised in unqualified terms by Canning in the English House of Commons.[1] The cry against Grattan was very violent, and members in the close confidence of the Government were extremely anxious, if possible, to connect him with the United Irish conspiracy. It was perfectly true that some of its members had at one time been his followers, and it was true also that in his capacity of leader in Parliament of the party which took charge of the questions of Catholic emancipation and reform, Grattan had come in contact with, and had occasionally seen at Tinnehinch, conspicuous reformers or advocates of Catholic emancipation from Ulster, who were in fact United Irishmen. It appears, indeed, to have been a common thing for active politicians to go down unsolicited to the county of Wicklow for the purpose of asking his advice, or of bringing him information or complaints. We have already had an example of such a

[1] See his speech in January 1799 (*Parl. Hist.* xxxiv. 229, 230). See, too, several allusions to it in the *Auckland Correspondence.*

conference, and we have seen the earnestness with which Grattan availed himself of the occasion, to impress upon his guests how great a calamity to Ireland, a French invasion must inevitably prove.[1] It is also true that, at the trial of Arthur O'Connor, Grattan, like the leading members of the English Opposition, had been called as a witness for the defence; but the published account of the trial clearly shows that, unlike the English witnesses, he confined his evidence to a bare statement of the good private character of O'Connor, and to denying that he had ever heard him express an opinion favourable to invasion.

In truth, the attitude of Grattan towards the French Revolution had, from the beginning, profoundly separated him from its admirers. There was on both sides much coldness and distrust, and Grattan appears to have had only a slight and superficial acquaintance even with Arthur O'Connor and Lord Edward Fitzgerald, who sat with him in Parliament, and who belonged to the same sphere of social life. We have seen how he had warned the Catholic Committee against Tone, and how contemptuously he had spoken of the abilities of Emmet. He can hardly, however, have failed to suspect that some of those with whom he came into occasional contact were steeped in treason, and at the time when there was a strong desire on the part of the Government to implicate Grattan, a Government informer called Hughes came forward, and told on oath before the Secret Commission of Parliament the following story, which was all the more dangerous because some parts of it were undoubtedly true.

He said that about April 28, 1798, he had accompanied Neilson to breakfast with Sweetman, one of the most prominent of the Catholic United Irishmen, who was then in confinement, and that he afterwards, with Neilson, proceeded in Sweetman's carriage to Tinnehinch. He was present, he said, when Grattan asked Neilson many questions about the state of Ulster. He inquired how many families had been driven out, how many houses had been burned by the Government or by the Orangemen, and what was the probable strength of the United Irishmen and of the Orangemen in Ulster. Hughes added that in the course of the conversation Grattan said he supposed Neilson was a United Irishman, and that Neilson answered that he was; that Neilson and

[1] Vol. vii. p. 145.

Grattan were for some time alone together; that on their return to Dublin, Neilson told him that his object in going to Tinnehinch had been 'to ask Grattan whether he would come forward, and that he had sworn him.' Hughes added also, that he saw a printed constitution of the United Irishmen in Grattan's library; that he heard Grattan tell Neilson that he would be in town about the following Tuesday; and that he understood from Neilson that Grattan had visited him in prison.[1]

The great improbability of this story must be obvious to anyone who considers the uniform attitude of Grattan towards the United Irishmen, and the horror which he had always both in public and private expressed of a French invasion, which it was the main object of the United Irishmen to effect. At the time when he was represented as having at the request of a man immensely his inferior, and with whom he was but slightly acquainted, reversed by one decisive step the whole of his past life, he was in fact withdrawn from all active politics, and living chiefly in England in order that he should be in no way mixed with them. The Government, too, which possessed from so many sources such minute and confidential information about the plans, proceedings, and negotiations of the conspirators, both in Ireland and on the Continent, must have been perfectly aware, that if a person of Grattan's importance had joined the conspiracy, this fact could not possibly have escaped their notice. Neilson was examined before the committee, and he at once declared upon oath that he had never sworn in Grattan; that he had never said he had done so; that Grattan was never a United Irishman, and had no concern in their transactions. He acknowledged, however, that he had been more than once at Tinnehinch, and that he had on one occasion unsuccessfully urged Grattan to 'come forward.'[2]

[1] *Report of the Committee of the House of Lords*, Appendix I.

[2] Compare Neilson's evidence in the *Report of the Committee of the House of Lords*, Appendix V., and his own version of it which he sent to Grattan. (Grattan's *Life*, iv. 410, 411.) Neilson's evidence was exceedingly inaccurate. He is stated in the *Report* to have said: 'I was twice with Mr. Grattan at Tinnehinch in April 1798. I either showed Mr. Grattan the last constitution of the Society of United Irishmen, or explained it to him, and pressed him to come forward. I was accompanied at these interviews by John Sweetman and Oliver Bond. But I do not believe Mr. Grattan was ever a United Irishman.' In his examination he did not mention his interview in company with Hughes; but immediately after his examination, he wrote to the Chancellor to correct

Grattan, whose word appears to me of much more weight than the oath of either Hughes or Neilson, has given two accounts of the matter, one in a letter to Erskine, asking for his legal advice, and another in a paper which at a later period he drew up for his son. In the former paper he says: 'The three persons, Bond, Neilson, and Sweetman, in the spring of 1798, rode to the country to breakfast with me once, and once only, without invitation or appointment, and at that visit of personal acquaintance which is most improperly called an *interview*, made no proposal to me, held no conversation with me, and never discoursed on their own subject. A considerable time after, Mr. Neilson, with a man named Hughes, whom I did not know, without appointment called on me to breakfast, which visit has been very improperly called an *interview*, when he held no consultation with me whatever, but only entered on a general conversation; with what specific view or application I cannot affirm; but I can say it was not attended with any effect; and further that he showed me the United Irishmen's published and printed constitution, and explained it, but did not show me or explain their plans. I must observe that the said constitution was only the organisation of their committees, such as appeared in the published report of the House of Commons a year and a half ago. . . . As far as Mr. Hughes' testimony relates to me, save only as above, it is without foundation. It is not true that Mr. Neilson ever swore me. It is not true that I ever went to see him in Newgate, and it is impossible Mr. Neilson ever said it.'[1]

In the paper which Grattan afterwards drew up for his son, there is a fuller account of the interview on which the charge was based. 'The conversation and interview with Neilson was nothing—it was quite accidental. I was in my study, and

his evidence, by stating that he had had another interview with Grattan, in company with Hughes.

It appears, from the statements both of Grattan and Sweetman, that Neilson was only once at Tinnehinch in company with Sweetman; that this visit took place, not in April (when Sweetman was in prison), but in the beginning of March; that nothing whatever was said on that occasion about the United Irishmen; and that the conversation referred to took place at the second and last visit of Neilson, which was that with Hughes. In a letter to Grattan, Neilson complained that his evidence had been misrepresented in the report; and he gave what he considered an exact statement of it. He does not speak, in this version, of two interviews in company with Sweetman; and he mentions that he called on Grattan with Sweetman, because he happened to be living in the neighbourhood.

[1] Grattan's *Life*, iv. 413, 414.

Neilson was shown up along with a Mr. Hughes whom I did not know. They complained very much of the excesses in the North of Ireland, and of the murders of the Catholics; and I remember Hughes saying that the phrase used by the anti-Catholics was, 'To Connaught or to hell with you.' They stated their numbers to be very great, and I then asked, 'How does it come, then, that they are always beaten?' I did not ask the question with a view to learn their force, as the examination would lead one to believe, but in consequence of these two individuals boasting of the numbers of these men who could not protect themselves. Hughes then went downstairs, and Neilson asked me to become a United Irishman. I declined. He produced the constitution, and left it in the room. This was nothing new. I had seen it long before, and it was generally printed and published. Hughes then returned, and they both went away. This is the entire of the transaction to which so much importance was attached.'[1]

This statement is, I have no doubt, the literal, unexaggerated truth. The Government, however, had found in the evidence of Hughes a formidable weapon for discrediting an opponent whom they greatly feared, and for gratifying a large section of their supporters. It is remarkable that in the report of the House of Commons, all notice of this matter was suppressed. The Speaker Foster is said to have urged that the statement of Hughes relating to Grattan was utterly untrustworthy, and that no notice ought to be taken of it. The House of Lords, probably under the influence of Lord Clare, published to the world the statement of Hughes, but accompanied it by a somewhat abbreviated version of the evidence of Neilson.

It does not appear that the Government ever really believed that Grattan had been a United Irishman; but Portland at once wrote to Cornwallis, urging that a criminal prosecution should be directed against him, on the much more plausible ground of 'misprision,' or concealment of treason. Cornwallis would have been perfectly willing to take this step, if there had been any chance of succeeding. 'I have consulted the best law opinions in the country,' he writes, 'on the expediency of a prosecution against Mr. Grattan for misprision of treason, according to your

[1] Grattan's *Life*, iv. 373, 374.

Grace's recommendation in your letter dated the 15th inst., and have found that all of them think that there would be no prospect of our succeeding in such an attempt, and that no jury would convict him on the evidence of Hughes, contradicted as he already has been in parts of his evidence by Neilson, and as he certainly would be by Sweetman.' He considered, however, that a great object had been attained by the publication of the evidence. 'Enough has already appeared to convince every unprejudiced person of Mr. Grattan's guilt, and so far to tarnish his character as to prevent his becoming again a man of consequence, and Mr. Pollock, who is busily employed in the North, has been directed to use his best endeavours to discover evidence that would establish a criminal charge against him; but if these means should fail, we must be satisfied with dismissing him from the Privy Council.[1]

They did most signally fail. Pollock, with his utmost endeavours, was unable to discover any of the evidence he sought for.[2] The story of Grattan's visit to Neilson in prison, which must have been established if true, was never substantiated; and Sweetman, as the Lord Lieutenant anticipated, was prepared to give strong evidence against the charge. In a letter written to Curran, he stated that in the one visit which he had paid to Grattan, in company with Neilson and Bond, not only had nothing passed relating to the United Irishmen, but the three United Irishmen had specially agreed not even to touch on the subject, in order that nothing like implication in treason could be imputed to Grattan; and having a very intimate knowledge of the inner working of the conspiracy, he avowed most solemnly that Mr. Grattan was totally unconnected with the United system.[3]

No attempt was made to bring the case before a law court; but the publication of the evidence of Hughes, and the admitted

[1] Cornwallis to Portland, Sept. 24, 1798.

[2] There is a curious account in Dickson's *Narrative* (pp. 67, 68) of the eagerness with which Pollock sought evidence against Grattan, and his disappointment at finding that Dickson's correspondence had been with Curran (who was his lawyer), and not with Grattan.

[3] Madden, iv. 40, 41. Sweetman's account of the perfectly innocent character of the visit at which he was present, is powerfully confirmed by the fact that Bond, who was present on the occasion, and who was examined by the Chancellor a few days after Neilson, was asked no question whatever about Grattan. (See his examination, in the *Report of the Secret Committee.*)

fact that some leading members of the conspiracy had visited Grattan in his house, were sufficient, in the excited state of public opinion, to make many of Grattan's countrymen treat the charge as if it were both formally advanced and legally proved. The ministerial papers were full of denunciations of the 'companion of conspirators.' The King struck the name of Grattan from the list of privy councillors, as sixteen years before he had struck off the name of Grattan's great rival, Flood. The authorities of Trinity College, who in the golden days of 1782 had hung his portrait in their examination hall, now removed it to a lumber room, and replaced it by that of Lord Clare. The Corporation of Dublin, while conferring the freedom of the city on several persons who had taken a conspicuous part in suppressing the rebellion, unanimously disfranchised their most illustrious representative. The Corporation of Londonderry took the same course, though some names that were conspicuous in granting the freedom, are not to be found in the resolution withdrawing it. The Guild of Dublin merchants, who had specially honoured Grattan as the man who had done most to emancipate Irish trade, now struck off his name from their roll. The Corporation of Cork changed the name of Grattan Street, calling it Duncan Street, after the victor of Camperdown.

It was not the first, nor was it the last, time that Grattan experienced the ingratitude and the inconstancy of his countrymen. His health was at this time very bad, and he was suffering from a nervous disorder which preyed greatly on his spirits. After the publication of the book of Duigenan he appeared for a short time in Dublin, and, according to the bad custom of the time, published an advertisement in the papers which was equivalent to a challenge, but it remained unnoticed by his assailant. Grattan found that he could scarcely appear without insult in the streets, and soon returned to England, where he remained for many months. In a letter published in the 'Courier' newspaper he challenged investigation of the charge that had been made against him, and at the same time, in strong and vehement language, attributed to the corruption and tyranny of the governing faction in Ireland the chief blame of the crimes and the calamities that had occurred.

A great question, however, was rapidly coming to maturity,

which was destined to call him from his retirement, and to make him once more a central figure in Irish political life. The English Ministers had now determined that the time had come when the governing system in Ireland must at all hazards be changed; and the last wave of the rebellion of 1798 had not yet subsided, when the project of a legislative Union was announced.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE UNION.

PART I.

THE reader who has followed with any care the long course of Irish history related in the present work, will have observed how often, and from how many different points of view, and at what long intervals, the possibility of a legislative Union between Great Britain and Ireland had been discussed or suggested. It is difficult, however, without some repetition, to form a clear, connected conception of the history of the question, and I shall, therefore, make no apology for devoting a few pages to recapitulating its earlier stages.

For a short time during the Commonwealth, such an Union had actually existed. The great scheme of parliamentary reform which had been devised by the Long Parliament was carried into effect by Cromwell, and thirty Irish and thirty Scotch members were summoned to the Reformed Parliament which met at Westminster in 1654, and to the succeeding Parliaments of the Commonwealth. With the Restoration the old constituencies and the old separate constitutions were revived, but the expediency of a legislative Union was soon after strongly advocated by Sir William Petty in that most remarkable work, the 'Political Anatomy of Ireland,' which was written about 1672, but published, after the death of the author, in 1691.

It was composed in the short interval of returning prosperity which followed the convulsions and confiscations of the Civil War. Reviewing the past connection between England and Ireland, Petty declared that Ireland had been for 500 years, only a loss and charge to England; that the suppression of the late rebellion

had cost England 'three times more, in men and money, than the substance of the whole country when reduced was worth;' and that 'at this day, when Ireland was never so rich and splendid, it was the advantage of the English to abandon their whole interest in that country, and fatal to any other nation to take it.' Nothing, he believed, could ever put an end to this evil but a measure that should 'tend to the transmuting one people into the other, and the thorough union of interests upon natural and lasting principles.' Much, he thought, might be done by transplanting, for a few years, an English population into Ireland, and an Irish population into England, but the most efficacious remedy would be a complete legislative Union. It was absurd that Englishmen, settled in Ireland for the King's interests and in the King's service, should be treated as aliens; that the King's subjects should pay custom when passing from one part of his dominions to another; that two distinct Parliaments should exercise legislative powers in Ireland; that every ship carrying West Indian goods to Ireland should be forced to unload in England. He contrasted the condition of Ireland with that of Wales, which had been completely united with England, and therefore completely pacified, and he concluded, 'that if both kingdoms, now two, were put into one, and under one legislative power and Parliament, the numbers whereof should be in the same proportion that the power and wealth of each nation are, there would be no danger such a Parliament should do anything to the prejudice of the English interest in Ireland; nor could the Irish ever complain of partiality when they shall be freely and proportionably represented in all Legislatures.' 'If it be just that men of English birth and estates living in Ireland should be represented in the legislative power, and that the Irish should not be judged by those whom they pretend do usurp their estates, it seems just and convenient that both kingdoms should be united and governed by one legislative power. Nor is it hard to show how this may be made practicable.'[1]

A new and very important influence affecting the question had now come into play. Petty had complained of the laws which in his time prohibited the export of Irish cattle to England, and fettered the Irish trade with the colonies; but with

[1] Petty's *Political Anatomy of Ireland*, ed. 1691, pp. 28–33, 124, 125.

the Revolution and the ascendency of the commercial class that followed it, an era of far more terrible commercial restrictions began. It was not a purely Irish policy, for it extended also to the American colonies and to Scotland; but, as we have seen, the geographical position of Ireland and the complete dependence of its Legislature made the effects of this policy in that country peculiarly disastrous. The utter ruin by English law of the woollen manufactures of Ireland, the restrictions by which the Irish were prohibited from exporting them, not only to England and to the English dominions, but also to all other countries whatsoever, added greatly to the poverty of the nation, drove a multitude of the best and most energetic settlers out of the country, kindled a fierce resentment among those who remained, and inspired Molyneux to publish in 1698 his famous treatise, asserting the rightful independence of the Irish Parliament. There is a passage in the work of this great champion of Irish independence which is peculiarly significant. He observes that there are traces of Irish members having under Edward III. been summoned to a Parliament in England, and he adds that if from these records 'it be concluded that the Parliament of England may bind Ireland, it must also be allowed that the people of Ireland ought to have their representatives in the Parliament of England; and this, I believe, we should be willing enough to embrace, but this is a happiness we can hardly hope for.'[1]

The history of the Scotch Union has been already related, and we have seen how closely it was connected with the history of the commercial disabilities. The exclusion of Scotch goods from the English colonies, and the severe restrictions on Scotch trade with England, had proved a fatal barrier to the progress of a poor and struggling country, and it had become a main object of the more intelligent Scotch politicians to procure their abolition. The English, on the other hand, were extremely unwilling to grant it, but they desired to secure and consolidate the connection of the two countries, which after the Revolution was in great danger. The violently hostile attitude towards England adopted by the Scotch Parliament during the war; the positive

[1] Molyneux, *Case of Ireland being bound by Acts of Parliament in England* (1698), pp. 97, 98.

refusal of that Parliament to adopt the succession of the Crown in the House of Hanover; the Scotch Bill of security providing that, on the death of Queen Anne without issue, the crown of Scotland should be completely severed from that of England, unless the religion and freedom of trade of Scotland had been previously secured, and the strong retaliatory measures taken by the English Parliament, together forced on the bargain of the Union. England, with extreme reluctance, conceded the commercial privileges which Scotland so ardently desired; Scotland, with extreme reluctance, surrendered her legislative independence as the only price by which industrial prosperity could be purchased. The measure was carried probably largely by corruption. It was certainly for more than a generation bitterly unpopular in the weaker country, but it bound the two nations together by an indissoluble tie, and the immense commercial benefits which it conferred on Scotland, proved one of the chief causes of her subsequent prosperity.[1]

The drama was watched with natural interest in Ireland. In 1703, four years before the Scotch Union was completed, both Houses of Parliament in Ireland concurred in a representation to the Queen in favour of a legislative Union between England and Ireland, and in 1707 the Irish House of Commons, while congratulating the Queen on the consummation of the Scotch measure, expressed a hope that God might put it into her heart to add greater strength and lustre to her crown by a yet more comprehensive union. Several of the ablest men in Ireland, such as Archbishop King, Sir W. Cox, and Bishop Nicholson, clearly saw the transcendent importance of such a measure,[2] and it is tolerably certain that, if England had desired it, it could then have been carried without difficulty and without discontent. Ireland had much more to gain by such a measure than Scotland, and the national feeling, which was so powerful in Scotland, and which at the close of the century became so powerful in Ireland, did not as yet exist. The Catholic population were sunk in poverty and degradation. Those who would have been their natural leaders in any political struggle had been completely broken by the events of the last sixty-six years, and were for the most part

[1] See vol. ii. pp. 50-65.
[2] Ibid. pp. 416, 417; Ball's *Irish Legislative Systems*, pp. 84, 85.

scattered as exiles over the Continent. All the best contemporary accounts represent the Catholics in Ireland as perfectly passive and perfectly indifferent to political questions, and they had assuredly no affection for a Legislature which consisted mainly of the victors in two recent Civil Wars, and which was animated by such sentiments as inspired the penal laws under Anne. The dominant portion of the Protestants, on the other hand, were new English settlers in possession of recently confiscated land, and they had not, and could not have had, any of the strong Irish feeling which was abundantly developed among their successors. In the pliant, plastic condition to which Ireland was then reduced, a slight touch of sagacious statesmanship might have changed the whole course of its future development. But in this as in so many other periods of Irish history, the favourable moment was suffered to pass. The spirit of commercial monopoly triumphed. The petition of the Irish Parliament was treated with contempt, and a long period of commercial restrictions, and penal laws, and complete parliamentary servitude, ensued.

Several writers during the next fifty or sixty years, both in England and Ireland, when reviewing the condition of Ireland or the state of English trade, advocated a legislative Union accompanied with free trade. Madden and Dobbs in Ireland, Postlethwayt, Decker, Sir Francis Brewster, and Child in England, were among them,[1] and they were soon followed by a writer of far wider fame. Adam Smith devoted nearly the last words of the 'Wealth of Nations' to the subject. He desired that Ireland as well as America should share the burden of the English national debt, but he contended that the increase of taxation which would follow a legislative Union would be more than compensated by the freedom of trade that would accompany it, and that it would confer upon Ireland the still greater benefit of softening the antagonism of class and creed, and delivering the nation from an aristocracy founded not on birth or fortune, but on religious and political prejudices. 'Without an Union with Great Britain,' he said, 'the inhabitants of Ireland are not likely, for many ages, to consider themselves one people.'[2]

At the time of the American War the possibility of an Union

[1] See vol. ii. p. 416; vol. iv. p. 444. [2] *Wealth of Nations*, book v. ch. iii.

was widely discussed, and many pamphlets pointing to such a measure appeared.[1] This war brought into vivid relief the dangers that might arise from the collision of distinct Legislatures in the same Empire, and it was probably remembered that, long before, Franklin had foreseen the danger, and had pointed out a legislative Union as the best means of lessening the chances of future separation.[2] Arthur Young more than once touched upon the subject, but with considerable hesitation. In one portion of his work he appeared to advocate it, but on the whole he inclined to the opinion that an arrangement by which England granted free trade and relaxed the restrictions on the Irish Legislature, while Ireland gave the British Government a complete control over her military resources, would prove more advantageous to both parties than an incorporating Union.[3] Montesquieu, as we have seen, expressed to Lord Charlemont a strong opinion in favour of a legislative Union.

These opinions were not confined to mere speculative writers. Franklin mentions, in a letter from London in September 1773, that it was reported that Lord Harcourt was about to introduce a legislative Union at the next meeting of the Irish Parliament. He added, that the idea of an Union was unpopular on the Eastern side of Ireland, through the belief that Dublin would decline, and that the Western and Southern parts would flourish on its ruins, but that for that very reason it was popular in the South and West.[4] It appears certain, that the expediency of a legislative Union had been the subject of consideration and confidential discussion among English statesmen during the Administration of the elder Pitt. No public steps, indeed, relating to it were taken, and the sentiments of that great statesman on the question are not easy to ascertain. The Irish policy which was disclosed in his despatches and speeches consisted mainly of three parts. He desired to respect most jealously and scrupulously the exclusive right of the Irish Parliament to tax Ireland. He viewed with great dislike the power of controlling the Executive in the disposal of the Irish army, which the Irish Parliament possessed in the law providing that 12,000 out

[1] See vol. iv. p. 504.

[2] See Franklin's *Third Letter to Governor Shirley* (written in 1754). Franklin at a later period recurred to this notion.

[3] *Tour in Ireland*, i. 65; ii. 344–348.

[4] Franklin's *Works*, viii. 84, 85.

of the 15,000 men supported from Irish resources must remain in Ireland, unless the Parliament gave its consent to their removal; and he believed that it ought to be a great end of English policy to consolidate the Protestant interest by conciliating as much as possible the Dissenters in the North. A conspicuous writer against the Union, however, who was intimately acquainted with some of the leading statesmen of his time, stated in 1799 that he believed there were men still living who well remembered 'that this very measure of an incorporating Union was a favourite object of the late Earl of Chatham, and that particularly in the year 1763 he often mentioned it as a matter of great benefit and importance to Great Britain, and that he formed to himself the hope of carrying the measure by means of the Catholics, and that his avowed object was an object of taxation.'[1] If, however, Chatham at one time really formed the idea, he appears to have afterwards abandoned it, for Lord Shelburne, who probably enjoyed more of his confidence than any other public man, assured Arthur Young that Chatham had repeatedly declared himself against the policy of a legislative Union, alleging among other reasons the bad effects it would exercise on the composition of the English Parliament.[2]

It is stated by Dalrymple that in 1776, at the close of the Administration of Lord Harcourt, there was some question of Lord Rochford succeeding him as Viceroy, and that he made it a condition that he should be authorised to attempt to carry two great measures—a repeal of the penal laws against the Catholics, and a legislative Union. Lord Harcourt was consulted on these proposals, and his advice appears to have been singularly sagacious. He said that there would not be much difficulty in re-

[1] *Address to the People of Ireland on the projected Union*, by Thomas Goold, pp. 13, 14. Goold says: 'This anecdote I have from a gentleman of much worth and respectability, who for many years had the honour of representing in the Parliament of Ireland an independent county.' Another writer said: 'This masterpiece of politics [the Union], which was the darling project of the illustrious Lord Chatham, will be carried into execution by his still greater son and successor.' (Cooper's *Letters on the Irish Nation, written in* 1799, p. 352.)

[2] Young's *Tour*, ii. 347. The Speaker Foster, in his speech against the Union, Feb. 17, 1800, said: 'When I talk of England, I cannot avoid mentioning the effect this Union may have there. The late Lord Chatham is said always to have objected to an Union, lest the additional number of members from Ireland might alter the constitution of the House and make it too unwieldy, or give too much weight to the democratic balance.' (P. 41.)

pealing the penal laws; 'that the Roman Catholics were all on the side of England and of the King of England in the American War, and that very good use might be made of them in the course of it,' and he added, that this was the opinion of some of the principal persons in Ireland, both in Church and State. On the subject of an Union, however, he thought there were 'great though perhaps not insurmountable difficulties.' 'To attempt it,' he said, 'in time of war would be insanity.' 'The minds of the Irish must be long prepared:' 'Government should take the assistance of the best writers on both sides of the water, to point out the advantages of the Union in different lights to different men.' 'No Union should be attempted unless the wish for it came from the side of Ireland, and even then not unless there was a strong body of troops there to keep the madmen in order, and these troops Irish and not English. In consequence of this opinion, Dalrymple says that Lord Rochford relinquished the idea of accepting the Viceroyalty.[1]

By the time of the American War the condition of Ireland and the wishes of the Irish people had profoundly changed. A long period of internal peace had greatly assuaged the divisions and animosities of Irish life, and the Irish Parliament, though a very restricted and a very corrupt body, contained several men of eminent abilities and of wide and liberal judgments. A strong national spirit had grown up among the Irish gentry, and there seemed every prospect that they would successfully lead and unite the divided sections of their people. The penal laws against the Catholics remained on the statute-book, but most of them had been allowed to fall into desuetude. There was a republican spirit among the Presbyterians of the North, but the Catholics for more than three-quarters of a century had shown no seditious disposition, and a large trading interest had arisen among them. The country was plainly improving. With increasing power, increasing patriotism, and increasing unity, the resentment against both the commercial disabilities and the legislative restrictions had strengthened, and the American War and the volunteer movement kindled the smouldering fire into a blaze. Two measures of the widest importance were conceded.

[1] Dalrymple's *Memoirs of Great Britain*, ed. 1790, iii. Appendix, pp. 347, 348. See, too, the *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 129.

The whole code of commercial restraint which excluded Irish commerce from the British plantations and from continental Europe was abolished, and the full legislative independence of the Irish Parliament was recognised.

The bearing of these measures on the question of an Union was very obvious. A few slight commercial restrictions remained, and trade with England was still regulated by separate acts of the two Parliaments, but Ireland obtained a field of commercial development which was fully adequate to her real requirements and capacities, and in her case, therefore, the main inducement which led Scotland to accept the Union no longer existed. The newly acquired independence of the Irish Parliament, on the other hand, greatly increased both the sacrifice involved in an Union and the national spirit opposed to it. I have already described at length the nature of the Constitution of 1782, the dangers that attended it, and the two great conflicts which, in the first seven years of its existence, brought the enfranchised Parliament into opposition to the Parliament of England. These conflicts have, I think, often been greatly misrepresented; they should be carefully examined by every student of Irish history, but I can here only refer to what I have already written on the subject. One very evident result of them was to strengthen greatly in the minds of English statesmen the conviction, that the tie that bound the two countries had become exceedingly precarious, and that some form of Union was necessary to secure and consolidate the Empire.

It is remarkable that George III. already looked with favour on the idea. In a letter written to North at the time of Lord Townshend's contest with the undertakers, he complained of the open profligacy of public men in Ireland, and predicted that it 'must sooner or later oblige this country seriously to consider whether the uniting it to this crown would not be the only means of making both islands flourishing.'[1] During the American War, and at the time when the great commercial concessions were made to Ireland, Lord Hillsborough, who was North's Secretary of State, was known to be warmly in favour of a legislative Union upon the Scotch model; Lord North

[1] See Walpole's *George III.* iii. 397, 398.

shared his opinion,[1] and after the surrender of all legislative control over Ireland, that opinion appears to have become common among English statesmen of all parties, and especially among those who were directly responsible for the government of Ireland. Even Fox, who introduced and carried the Act of Renunciation, afterwards acknowledged that it was only with extreme reluctance that he had consented to leave the Empire without any general superintending authority over its commercial and external legislation, and he ardently desired that some supplemental treaty should be carried, binding the two countries more closely together.[2] The Duke of Richmond in 1783 openly declared in the House of Lords, that nothing short of an incorporating Union could avert the danger of the Irish Parliament, in some future war, throwing the weight of its influence in opposition to England.[3] The Duke of Portland, who was Lord Lieutenant when the legislative independence was conceded, acknowledged that it was only with 'the strongest and most poignant reluctance,' and under the stress of an overwhelming necessity, that he consented to recommend that measure, and he told his Government confidentially, that unless the Irish Parliament would consent to enter into some treaty placing the regulation of trade, the consideration to be granted by Ireland for the protection of the British navy, and the share which Ireland should contribute to the general support of the Empire, above the fluctuating moods of successive Parliaments, it was very questionable whether it might not be good policy to abandon Ireland altogether.[4] Temple, who succeeded Portland as Viceroy, predicted that the concession which had been made, was 'but the beginning of a scene which will close for ever the account between the two kingdoms.'[5] Even the Duke of Rutland, whose Viceroyalty covers the most prosperous period of the independent existence of the Irish Parliament, was, in private, strongly in favour of a legislative Union, and believed that, without such a measure, Ireland

[1] Some considerable light has recently been thrown upon the opinions of Hillsborough and North on this subject in 1779, by the publication of the *Diaries and Letters of Thomas Hutchinson* (Governor of Massachusetts Bay), ii. 257, 295. See, too, Walpole's *Memoirs of George III.* iv. 200.

[2] Vol. vi. pp. 307, 308.

[3] Ibid. p. 321.

[4] Vol. iv. pp. 550, 551; vol. vi. pp. 308, 309.

[5] Vol. vi. p. 310.

would not remain for twenty years connected with Great Britain.[1]

The failure of the commercial propositions of 1785 was very unfortunate. The original scheme of Pitt was, as we have seen, gladly accepted by the Irish Parliament. It would have regulated permanently both the commercial intercourse between the two countries and the contribution of Ireland to the defence of the Empire; and a reform of Parliament upon a Protestant basis, such as Pitt then contemplated, would have been sufficient to include in the parliamentary system by far the greater part of the energy, intelligence, and property of the nation.

In the debates on this question, the open advocacy of a legislative Union by Wilberforce, Lord Lansdowne, and Lord Sackville,[2] showed clearly the current of English political thought. Lord Camden, the favourite colleague of Chatham, and the representative of the most liberal section of English politics, supported the commercial propositions in a speech in which he represented the existing condition of Ireland as threatening civil war, and he was understood to argue in favour of them on the ground that they would draw the two peoples 'into a legislative Union, which was the object ultimately to be desired.' Lord Stormont, the old colleague of North, on the other hand, opposed the propositions, arguing that if the proposed settlement proved permanent and final, 'there was of course an end of all hope that the two kingdoms would ever be under one Legislature;' and that even if it were not final, it would still be fatal to an Union, 'because, every possible advantage being held out by England to the Irish by the present propositions, she could have nothing reserved by which she might afterwards induce them to consent to an Union—she could have burdens only to offer to Ireland, a very bad inducement to an union of Legislatures.'[3] In the House of Commons, Lord North spoke powerfully in the same sense. 'He would most gladly,' he said, 'admit Ireland to a participation of every advantage of trade, provided she was so connected with us as to form one people with us, under one Government,

[1] Vol. vi. p. 404.

[2] Ibid. p. 404.

[3] *Parl. Hist.* xxv. 848. Lord Camden's son (the Irish Lord Lieutenant), writes: 'I inherit . . . my father's opinion that Ireland must be our province if she will not be persuaded to an Union.' (*Castlereagh Correspondence*, i. 156.)

one Legislature. . . . Until the happy day should come that would make the two kingdoms one, he did not conceive it just that one should be enriched at the expense of the other.'[1] Dean Tucker at this time drew up a series of answers to the popular arguments against an Union, which was published near the close of the century, and was made much use of in the discussions on the Union.[2]

The failure of this negotiation, and the subsequent difference on the Regency question, probably greatly strengthened the desire of English statesmen to effect an Union, and it certainly strengthened their indisposition to any measures of reform which would weaken their control over the Irish Legislature. A letter of the first Lord Camden is preserved, in which he avows his decided opinion that the corruption and consequent subservience of the Irish Parliament was, under the new Constitution of Ireland, the only means by which the connection could be maintained, and that sooner or later that Constitution, if it continued, must lead to a civil war.[3] It is a significant fact, too, that from this time the overtures of the Irish Parliament, for a commercial union with England on the lines of Pitt's original scheme, were uniformly declined.

If we now turn from the opinions of English statesmen to the public opinion in Ireland, we shall find a remarkable contrast. No single fact is more apparent in the Irish history of the last half of the century, than the strong and vehement dread of an Union in Ireland. It does not date from the establishment of Irish legislative independence. I have already mentioned the furious riots that convulsed Dublin as early as 1759, on account of an unfounded rumour that such a measure was in contemplation.[4] In 1776 Arthur Young collected opinions on the subject of an Union with Great Britain, and was informed, 'that nothing was so unpopular in Ireland as such an idea.'[5] In 1780 Lord Hillsborough, having in his confidential correspondence with the Lord Lieutenant thrown out a hint that some such measure was desirable, Buckinghamshire answered, 'Let me earnestly recommend to you not to utter the word Union in a whisper, or

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxv. 633.
[2] They were published by Dr. Clarke, in a tract called *Union or Separation* (1799).
[3] Campbell's *Chancellors*, vii. 29.
[4] Vol. ii. pp. 435, 436.
[5] *Tour in Ireland*, i. 65.

to drop it from your pen. The present temper will not bear it.'[1] In 1785, when Bishop Watson pressed upon the Duke of Rutland the policy of a legislative Union, the Lord Lieutenant answered that he fully agreed with him, but that anyone who proposed such a measure in Ireland would be tarred and feathered.[2] On most subjects the Irish Parliament was exceedingly subservient, but on the subject of its own exclusive legislative competence it was even feverishly jealous, and the suspicion that the English Government was conspiring against the settlement which had been so formally and so solemnly guaranteed in 1782 and 1783, never failed to kindle a fierce resentment in the nation. In the violent opposition which Grattan led to the amended commercial propositions in 1785, the irritation excited by this suspicion, and by the language used in England on the subject, is very apparent. Grattan saw in the amended proposals, 'an intolerance of the parliamentary Constitution of Ireland, a declaration that the full and free external legislation of the Irish Parliament is incompatible with the British Empire.' He described them as 'an incipient and a creeping Union.' He declared, that in opposing them he considered himself as opposing 'an Union *in limine*,' and already in this debate he fully elaborated the doctrine of the incompetence of the Irish Parliament to carry a legislative Union, which fourteen years later became so prominent in the discussions on the measure.[3]

This strong feeling on the part of the political classes in Ireland was certainly not due to any disloyal or anti-English feeling. At the risk of wearying my readers by repetition, I must again remind them, that the Irish Parliament of 1782 was a body utterly unlike any Parliament that could be set up by modern politicians. It was essentially an assembly of the leading members of the landed gentry of the country; of the section of the community which was bound to the English connection by the strongest ties of sympathy and interest; of the chief representatives of property; of the classes from which, since the Union, the magistracy and the grand juries have been principally formed. It had uniformly and readily followed the lead of the English Parliament in all questions of foreign policy. It had contributed largely and ungrudgingly, both in soldiers and in

[1] Vol. iv. p. 504. [2] Vol. vi. p. 404. [3] Grattan's *Speeches*, i. 240–243.

money, to the support of the Empire in every war that had arisen, and it was perfectly ready to enter into a treaty for a permanent contribution to the British navy, provided such a treaty could be framed without impairing its legislative supremacy. Viceroy after viceroy had emphatically acknowledged its unmixed loyalty, and they made no complaint of its present dispositions; but at the same time the most experienced English statesmen and a succession of English viceroys were convinced that the permanent concurrence of two independent Parliaments under the Constitution of 1782 was impossible, and that a collision between the two Parliaments in time of peace would be dangerous, and in time of war might very easily be fatal to the connection.

In Ireland, on the other hand, the independence of the Parliament was supported by the strong pride and passion of Nationality—a sentiment which may be the source both of good and of evil, but which, whether it be wise or unwise, must always be a most powerful element in political calculations. Irish statesmen, too, reviewing English legislation since the Restoration, and perceiving the still prevailing spirit of commercial monopoly, contended that the material interests of Ireland could not be safely entrusted to a British Parliament. They foresaw that an identification of Legislatures would ultimately lead to an assimilation of taxation, raising Irish contributions to the English level. They perceived that Ireland was rapidly developing into a considerable nation, with its own type of character and its own conditions of prosperity; and they especially dreaded the moral effects of an Union in promoting absenteeism, weakening the power of the landed gentry, and thus destroying a guiding influence, which in the peculiar conditions of Ireland was transcendently important. Sir Robert Peel, many years later, spoke of 'the severance of the connection between the constituent body of Ireland and the natural aristocracy of the country,' as perhaps the greatest and most irreparable calamity that could befall Ireland, and on this point Grattan and Peel were entirely agreed. Adam Smith believed that the great work of uniting into one people the severed elements of Irish life, could be only speedily accomplished if the legislative power was transferred to a larger and impartial assembly un-

swayed by local tyrannies, factions, and corruptions. Grattan believed that it could only be attained by the strong guidance of the loyal gentry of both religions, acting together in a national Legislature and appealing to a national sentiment, and he dreaded, with an intense but by no means exaggerated fear, the consequence to Ireland if the guidance of her people passed into the hands of dishonest, disreputable, and disloyal adventurers. The rapid and indisputable progress of national prosperity in the last decades of the century, though in truth it was largely due to causes that had very little relation to politics, strengthened the feeling in support of the local Legislature, and strong selfish as well as unselfish considerations tended in the same direction. Dublin was furious at the thought of a measure which would transfer the aristocracy and leading gentry of Ireland to London. The Irish bar had an enormous influence, both in the Parliament and in the country, and it would be a fatal blow to it if the Parliament no longer sat in the neighbourhood of the Law Courts; the great borough owners perceived that a legislative Union must take the virtual government of Ireland out of their hands, and a crowd of needy legislators saw in it the extinction of the system under which they could always, by judicious voting, obtain places for themselves or their relatives.

It is not surprising that from all these sources a body of opinion hostile to a legislative Union should have arisen in Ireland which appeared wholly irresistible. For about ten years after the declaration of independence it was unbroken, and it is, I believe, no exaggeration to say, that during that period not a single Irish politician or writer of real eminence was in favour of such a measure. At this time it was wholly impracticable, for no corruption and no intimidation would have induced the Irish Parliament to consent to it.

The disastrous events of the last years of the century, however, gradually produced some change. The danger of foreign invasion, the terrible rapidity with which conspiracy and anarchy spread through the masses of the people, and the menacing aspects which the Catholic question assumed, began to shake the security of property, and to spread vague and growing alarms among all classes. The concession of the franchise in 1793 to a vast, semi-barbarous Catholic democracy, portended, in the eyes

of many, the downfall of the Protestant Establishment, and perhaps of the existing settlement of property. From this time a few men began, through fear or through resentment, to look with more favour on the idea of an Union, and Lord Clare steadily, though as yet secretly, urged its necessity.

I have shown how the notion of a legislative Union began to dawn on many minds in connection with the Catholic question; how some men thought that the Protestants, alarmed or exasperated by Catholic progress, would be inclined to take shelter in such a measure; how other men foresaw that the concession of Catholic emancipation might play the same part in the Irish Union which trade privileges had played in the union with Scotland; and how Pitt himself evidently shared the idea. The remarkable letter, written by him in the November of 1792, which I have cited from the Westmorland Correspondence, speaks of an Union as a vague, doubtful, distant prospect, but as a measure which had been for some time largely occupying his thoughts, and which he believed to be the one real solution of the difficulties of Ireland. It would offer to the Protestants full security for their property and their Church, and it would, at the same time, remove the chief argument against Catholic suffrage. The language of Charlemont, Grattan, and Curran proves that the intentions and wishes of the English Government were clearly perceived, and that they were exciting in the independent section of Irish politicians great disquietude and determined hostility.[1]

There are periods, both in private and public life, when the ablest men experience what gamblers call a run of ill luck. At such times the steadiest hand seems to lose its cunning, and the strongest judgment its balance, and mistake follows mistake. Some fatality of this kind seems to have hung over Irish legislation in those critical years which are chiefly marked by the Relief Act of 1793, and by the Fitzwilliam episode. I have done all that lies in my power to unravel with care and impartiality, the maze of conflicting motives and impulses that governed the strangely wayward and uncertain course of English government of Ireland during those anxious years. I have endeavoured to show that Pitt and Dundas were animated by a spirit of real and genuine liberality to the Catholics, and were convinced as a

[1] Vol. vi. pp. 512, 513, 523, 524.

matter of policy that the United Irish conspiracy could only be checked by conciliating them, but that they were hampered by the opposition of the Irish Government, by the opposition of the King, by their own ignorance of the state of Ireland, and by their desire to reserve some great Catholic concession as an inducement to the Union. I have endeavoured also to show how motives of a different kind—jealousy of Whig ascendency in the remodelled Government; a misunderstanding with Fitzwilliam about the extent of his powers; a question of patronage which was treated as a question of honour—acted upon their conduct, and how the whole was aggravated by a natural lukewarmness and indecision of purpose in dealing with great questions of public policy, which appears to me to have been a constitutional infirmity of Pitt. But whatever opinion the reader may form about this explanation, he will hardly, I think, question that the net results of the policy of this period were extremely calamitous. The Relief Act of 1793 settled nothing, and promised to add enormously both to the difficulty and the danger of the government of Ireland. The sudden recall of Lord Fitzwilliam, after the hopes that had been raised, gave a decisive impulse to Catholic disloyalty. The appeal by the Government to Protestant support against Catholic emancipation, stimulated most fatally that spirit of religious dissension which was again rising rapidly in Ireland.

The situation was made much worse when Lord Fitzwilliam published the passage from a confidential letter of the Duke of Portland, declaring that the postponement of the Catholic Relief Bill would be 'the means of doing a greater service to the British Empire than it has been capable of receiving since the Revolution, or at least since the Union.' The meaning which was at once attached to this passage was, that the Government desired to delay the concession in order to obtain an Union, and the question was thus forced prominently on public attention. Its reception was exceedingly unfavourable, and the resolution of the great Catholic Assembly in Francis Street Chapel showed that, whatever support the measure might receive from some Catholics, it was certain to meet from the Catholic Committee, who led the active politics of that body, an implacable opposition.[1] Grattan, on his side, predicted that if the old taskmasters re-

[1] Vol. vii. pp. 72, 94, 95.

turned to power, 'they would extinguish Ireland, or Ireland must remove them.'[1]

The horrible years of growing crime, anarchy, and dissension which followed, convinced many that a great change of system was required. The Parliament remained, indeed, a zealously loyal body, and Arthur O'Connor and Lord Edward Fitzgerald were probably the only members in it whose sympathies were with France. But outside its walls the doctrine was openly professed, that Ireland ought not to support England in the French war; and at the same time the prospects of an invasion; the imminent fear of rebellion; the violent religious war which had broken out in Ulster, and the rumours that were spread among the panic-stricken Catholics of Orange conspiracies to massacre them, had all tended to aggravate enormously the difficulties of local government in Ireland. The capacity of any portion of an empire for extended and popular self-government is not a mere question of constitutional machinery or of abstract reasoning. It depends essentially upon the character and dispositions of the people for whom that self-government is intended. A constitutional arrangement which in one country will be harmless or beneficent, in another country will infallibly lead to civil war, to confiscation of property, to utter anarchy and ruin. Loyalty and moderation; a respect for law, for property, and for authority; a sentiment of common patriotism uniting the different sections of the community; a healthy disposition of classes, under which trustworthy and honourable men rise naturally to leadership—these are the conditions upon which all successful self-government must depend. The events of Irish history had made the soil of Ireland peculiarly unfavourable to it, but for a long period before the outbreak of the French Revolution there had been a great and rapid improvement. The country was not, and never has been, fit for a democratic Government, but many of the best Irishmen believed that healthy elements of self-government had grown up, which would make it possible for the management of affairs to pass safely and most beneficially out of the hands of the corrupt aristocracy of borough owners. But this prospect was now visibly receding, as the old fissures that divided Irish

[1] Answer to the Catholic Address, Feb. 27, 1795. (Grattan's *Miscellaneous Works*, p. 296.)

life reopened, and as fear and hatred began to separate classes which had for many years been approximating. The opinion so powerfully expressed by General Knox about the necessity of an Union, was no doubt held by other intelligent observers.[1] It was, however, still that of isolated and scattered individuals, and up to the outbreak of the rebellion there was no party in Ireland which desired such a measure, no party which would even tolerate its proposal.

The language of Gordon on this subject is very remarkable. That temperate and truthful historian was himself a supporter of the Union, and he had therefore no disposition to overrate the feeling against it. Yet he declares that it could not possibly have been carried, but for the horrors of the rebellion. 'So odious,' he says, 'was the measure to multitudes whose pride or private interest, real or imaginary, was engaged, that it could not with the smallest probability of success be proposed, until prejudice was in some degree overcome by the calamities and dangers of the rebellion.'[2]

From this fact a charge of the most tremendous kind has been elaborated against the English Government, which will be found repeated again and again by popular writers in Ireland, and which has sunk deeply into the popular belief. It is that the English Government, desiring an Union and perceiving that it could not be effected without a convulsion, deliberately forced on the rebellion as a means of effecting it. In a memoir written by Dr. McNevin shortly after the Union, this charge is drawn up with the utmost confidence. McNevin observes that Lord Clare acknowledged that, for many years before the Union, the destruction of the Irish Parliament had been a main object of his policy. 'Joined with him,' he says, 'in this conspiracy were some others, and in the number Lord Castlereagh, all of whom,

[1] Wilberforce, in 1796, wrote the following memoranda, derived from conversations with Irishmen: 'The Irish gentry (sensible cool men) entertain very serious apprehensions of the Roman Catholics—say they keep a register of the forfeited lands; that their priests have little influence over them; the menial servants commonly Roman Catholics; masters cannot depend on them; if the French were to land 10,000 men, they would infallibly rise. The hatred and bad opinion which the lower Roman Catholics entertain against the Protestants, and particularly the English, is very great. It seems impossible to end quietly unless an Union takes place. As wealth is diffused, the lower orders will learn the secret of their strength.' (*Life of Wilberforce*, ii. 163.)

[2] Gordon's *History of the Rebellion*, pp. 295, 296.

with cold-blooded artifice, stirred up an insurrection, that was to supply the necessary pretext for effecting their nefarious design. In former times resort was had to similar acts of outrage, for the purpose of driving the natives into a resistance that should be followed by a forfeiture of their estates. Now a rebellion was intentionally produced by the chief agents of the British Ministry, in order to give an opportunity for confiscating the whole political power and the independent character of the country by an Act of Union.' McNevin acknowledges that the conspirators, among whom he was himself a leader, were aiming at a separation, though he contends that they contemplated it only in the case of a refusal of reform, and that they wished to obtain it only 'through the co-operation of a respectable French force, to exclude the barbarity of a purely civil war.' 'But for the systematic atrocities,' he continues, 'of the conspirators against the legislative independence of Ireland, no *civil war* would have occurred there to the present moment. We have the authority of the American Congress that the colonies were driven designedly into resistance, for the purpose of giving an opportunity to impose on them a standing army, illegal taxes, and to establish among them a system of despotism. This arbitrary project, after miscarrying in America, was transferred by the same monarch to Ireland, and unhappily succeeded there. Before assistance could be obtained against his schemes from the natural ally of his persecuted subjects, an enlarged scope was given to the intolerable practice of house burnings, free quarters, tortures, and summary executions, which, as the Ministry intended, exploded in rebellion. After this manner they facilitated the Union.'

Nor was even this the full extent of the perfidy attributed to them. 'Lord Cornwallis,' writes McNevin, 'declared himself inclined to justice and conciliation. He was violently opposed by the Orange faction in the Cabinet, and from a motive which he did not then disclose, but which subsequent events have shown to be the projected union of the two countries, he wished to make a merit with those who had suffered most from the British Government, by teaching them to throw the severity of their sufferings on their own villanous Parliament and merciless countrymen.'[1]

[1] *Pieces of Irish History*, pp. 143, 144, 148.

O'Connell and his followers have more than once repeated this charge, and accused the English Government of having deliberately promoted the rebellion for the purpose of carrying the Union. O'Connell explained on this hypothesis the whole Fitzwilliam episode. He dwelt upon the fact that the Government, for many months before the outbreak of the rebellion, had secret information pointing out its most active leaders, and that, in spite of the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, those leaders were suffered to remain at large, and he insisted upon the passage from the report of the Secret Committee in which Lord Castlereagh spoke of the measures that had been taken to cause the rebellion to explode.

Such an accusation will probably appear to most readers too wildly extravagant to require a lengthened refutation. Very few Englishmen will believe that Pitt was capable either of the extreme wickedness of deliberately kindling a great rebellion for the purpose of carrying his favourite measure, or of the extreme folly of doing this at a time when all the resources of England were strained to the utmost in a desperate and most doubtful contest with the mighty power of Napoleon. In the Irish Government no one supported more strongly both the anti-Catholic policy, and the military severities to which the rebellion has been attributed, than the Speaker Foster, who was the most powerful of all the opponents of the Union; while the perfectly simple and honourable motives that inspired the humaner policy of Cornwallis appear with transparent clearness in his confidential letters. The reasons which long withheld the Government from arresting United Irish leaders when they had not sufficient evidence to put them on their trial, have been already explained; and if martial law forced the conspiracy into a premature explosion, it did so only when the country had been already organised for rebellion, and when it was an object of the first importance to disarm it before the expected arrival of the French. At the same time, fluctuating and unskilful policy has often the effects of calculated malevolence, and the mistakes of the Government both in England and Ireland undoubtedly contributed very largely to the hideous scenes of social and political anarchy, to the religious hatreds and religious panics, which alone rendered possible the legislative Union. Nor can it, I think, be

denied that it is in a high degree probable, that a desire to carry a legislative Union had a considerable influence in dictating the policy which in fact produced the rebellion, and that there were politicians who were prepared to pursue that policy even at the risk of a rebellion, and who were eager to make use of the rebellion when it broke out, for the purpose of accomplishing their design. The following striking passage from a work which I have often quoted, shows the extreme severity with which the situation was judged by a perfectly loyal writer, who was in general one of the most temperate and most competent then living in Ireland. 'To affirm,' writes Newenham, 'that the Government of Ireland facilitated the growth of rebellion, for the purpose of effecting the Union, would be to hold language not perhaps sufficiently warranted by facts. But to affirm that the rebellion was kept alive for that purpose, seems perfectly warrantable. The charge was boldly made in the writer's hearing, during one of the debates on the Union by an honourable gentleman, who held a profitable place under the Crown. And to affirm that that measure never would have been carried into effect without the occurrence of a rebellion, similar in respect of its attendant and previous circumstances to that of 1798, is to advance what nineteen in twenty men who were acquainted with the political sentiments of the Irish people at that time, will feel little difficulty in assenting to.'[1]

A careful examination of the confidential correspondence of this time, appears to show that, although the expediency of a legislative Union had long been present in the minds of Pitt and of several leading English statesmen, and although it had been persistently urged by Clare since 1793, no settled and definite project of introducing such a measure was formed in England,

[1] Newenham's *State of Ireland*, p. 269; see, too, p. 270. The language of Miss Edgeworth shows strongly the feeling prevailing on this subject among the Protestants. 'Government,' she says, 'having at this time the Union between Great Britain and Ireland in contemplation, were desirous that the Irish aristocracy and country gentlemen should be convinced of the kingdom's insufficiency to her own defence against invasion or internal insurrection. With this view, it was politic to let the different parties struggle with each other, till they completely felt their weakness and their danger. . . . It is certain that the combinations of the disaffected at home, and the advance of foreign invaders, were not checked till the peril became imminent, and till the purpose of creating universal alarm had been fully effected.' (*Life of R. L. Edgeworth*, ii. 217, 218.)

before the outbreak of the rebellion.[1] Pitt, according to his usual custom, discussed it at length in a very small circle, for some time before it was even suggested to his Cabinet. Perhaps the earliest notice of it, is a letter of June 4, 1798, in which Pitt writes to Auckland that he had lately been discussing with Lord Grenville, the expediency of taking steps for carrying an Union immediately after the suppression of the rebellion. They had been studying the Scotch Act of Union, and they especially desired the assistance of Auckland in framing its trade and finance clauses. Auckland appears to have communicated with Clare, for a few days later he received a letter from that statesman containing the following passage: 'As to the subject of an Union with the British Parliament, I have long been of opinion that nothing short of it can save this country. I stated the opinion very strongly to Mr. Pitt in the year 1793, immediately after that fatal mistake, into which he was betrayed by Mr. Burke and Mr. Dundas, in receiving an appeal from the Irish Parliament by a popish democracy. I again stated the same opinion to him last winter; and if this were a time for it, I think I could make it clear and plain to every dispassionate man in the British Empire, that it is utterly impossible to preserve this country to the British Crown, if we are to depend upon the precarious bond of union which now subsists between Great Britain and Ireland. It makes me almost mad, when I look back at the madness, folly, and corruption in both countries, which have brought us to the verge of destruction.'[2]

When Lord Cornwallis arrived in Ireland on June 20, he does not appear to have known anything about an intention to carry an Union, or, at least, to have received any fixed instructions relating to it.[3] A few weeks later, however, a small number of persons, who were closely connected with the Government of Ireland, were sounded on the subject. Lord Camden appears to have been much consulted, and he wrote

[1] Clare, in his speech on the Union, said: 'I pressed it without effect, until British Ministers and the British nation were roused to a sense of their common danger by the late sanguinary and unprovoked rebellion.'

[2] *Auckland Correspondence*, iv. 2, 8. The letter of Clare is undated, but it was written two or three days after the battle of New Ross.

[3] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, ii. 439. *Auckland Correspondence*, iv. 29. See, however, the remarks of Sir C. Lewis, *Administrations of Great Britain*, pp. 183, 184.

about this time to Lord Castlereagh, 'The King and every one of his Ministers are inclined to an Union, and it will certainly be taken into consideration here, and you will probably hear from the Duke of Portland upon it.'[1] Pelham was still Chief Secretary, though ill health compelled him to remain in England; and it appears from a letter written to him by William Elliot, on July 28, that at that date Cornwallis leaned decidedly towards an Union, but that both Pelham and Elliot were extremely reluctant to undertake such a measure, and extremely doubtful whether 'the advantages resulting from it would answer the expectation.'[2] Shortly after, Sylvester Douglas, who had been the Irish Chief Secretary in 1794, wrote to Pelham advocating the measure, and his letter is especially interesting, as it was written from Dover, immediately after a consultation with Pitt at Walmer Castle. Douglas fully agreed with Pelham that there were great difficulties attending an Union, but he maintained that the safety of the Empire required it, and that if the measure was desirable, the present was a very favourable moment for carrying it. It would not be desirable unless it was to the advantage of both countries, but great authorities, such as Petty, Adam Smith, and Bacon (in his advocacy of the Scotch Union), were in favour of it, and there was one consideration which now dominated all others. Can Ireland, he asked, hang much longer to England by the present slender thread, 'when some of their ablest men treat the interference of the Executive of the Empire in those very affairs of Ireland, which most concern the general interests of the Empire, as the usurped tyranny of a foreign Cabinet?' and when 'a few Irish enthusiasts' have been able to engage nearly 200,000 men to

[1] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, i. 376. This letter is unfortunately undated.

[2] W. Elliot to Pelham, July 28; S. Douglas to Pelham, Sept. 12, 1798. (*Pelham MSS.*) On Sept. 13 Pelham wrote to Castlereagh that he had been visiting Camden, who had just come from Pitt. 'We discussed, as you may imagine, a subject which, I understand, you are more friendly to than I am. I confess that I have not considered it sufficiently to be satisfied of the advantages resulting from it, and must therefore be against it, for it is not a thing to attempt without the certainty of some great benefit arising from it. However, I have lately turned my thoughts more to the subject than I had ever done before, and think it more practicable in the detail than I at first imagined. . . . In times of speculation like the present, there is great danger in any change; and unless certain principles are laid down as landmarks to which we can always recur, I should much fear a complete wreck of both countries.' (*Castlereagh Correspondence*, i. 345, 346.)

break the connection? The century was fast drawing to a close, but Douglas believed that, even before its end, the frail tie that bound the two countries would probably be severed unless an Union were carried. Who could believe, after the confessions of Tone, Emmet, McNevin, and O'Connor, that Catholic emancipation would postpone the evil? It would probably accelerate it. For his own part, Douglas said, he could not resist the force of a question put by the United Irishmen in one of their earliest publications. 'Is there any middle state between the extremes of Union with Great Britain and total separation?'[1]

Castlereagh, who already discharged most of the duties of Chief Secretary, appears to have been from the first a decided advocate of the Union. His views will be exhibited in detail in the course of this narrative, but a significant passage may be here cited from one of his earliest letters about it. Writing on September 7, he expresses his deep gratification at the somewhat tardy resolution of the Government to send over a large English force, for the complete suppression of the rebellion and the protection of the country against invasion. 'I consider it peculiarly advantageous,' he writes, 'that we shall owe our security so entirely to the interposition of Great Britain. I have always been apprehensive of that false confidence which might arise from an impression that security had been obtained by our own exertions. Nothing would tend so much to make the public mind impracticable with a view to that future settlement, without which we can never hope for any permanent tranquillity.'[2]

The opinions of Cornwallis were gradually unfolded, and they must be carefully followed. Though the Union is not named, it is evidently referred to in a letter of July 20, in which Cornwallis, having mentioned that the rebellion was almost subdued, adds, 'How or when to bring forward, or even to broach, the great point of ultimate settlement, is a matter in which I cannot see the most distant encouragement. The two or three people whom I have ventured in the most cautious manner to sound, say that it must not be mentioned now; that this is a time of too much danger to agitate such a question; but if a period of safety

[1] S. Douglas to Pelham, Sept. 12, 1798.
[2] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, i. 337.

should come when boroughs will be considered as a sure property, and all good jobs again appear within our grasp, that moment will not, I am afraid, be found propitious for expecting those sacrifices which must be required. Convinced as I am that it is the only measure which can long preserve this country, I will never lose sight of it; and happy shall I be if that fortunate opportunity should ever arrive, when we may neither think ourselves in too much danger nor in too much security to suffer its production.'[1]

In September, he recurs to the subject, and still in a desponding tone. The great question, he says, of Irish administration is, 'how this country can be governed and preserved, and rendered a source of strength and power, instead of remaining an useless and almost intolerable burden to Great Britain.' 'A perseverance in the system which has hitherto been pursued can only lead us from bad to worse, and after exhausting the resources of Britain, must end in the total separation of the two countries.' 'With regard to future plans, I can only say that some mode must be adopted to soften the hatred of the Catholics to our Government. Whether this can be done by advantages held out to them from an Union with Great Britain; by some provision for their clergy, or by some modification of tithe, which is the grievance of which they complain, I will not presume to determine. The first of these propositions is undoubtedly the most desirable, if the dangers with which we are surrounded will admit of our making the attempt; but the dispositions of the people at large, and especially of the North, must be previously felt.'[2]

A few days later he notices the rise of a fatal division, which affected profoundly the whole future of the question. 'The principal people here are so frightened that they would, I believe, readily consent to an Union, but then it must be a Protestant Union; and even the Chancellor, who is the most right-headed politician in this country, will not hear of the Roman Catholics sitting in the United Parliament.' 'This country is daily becoming more disturbed. Religious animosities increase, and, I am sorry to say, are encouraged by the foolish violence of all the principal persons who have been in the habit of governing this

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, ii. 365. [2] Ibid. ii. 404, 405.

island. . . . The great measure, from which I looked for so much good, will, if carried, fall far short of my expectations, as all the leading persons here, not excepting the Chancellor, are determined to resist the extension of its operation to the Catholics. I feel the measure of so much importance, that it is worth carrying anyhow, but I am determined not to submit to the insertion of any clause that shall make the exclusion of the Catholics a fundamental part of the Union, as I am fully convinced that, until the Catholics are admitted into a general participation of rights (which when incorporated with the British Government they cannot abuse), there will be no peace or safety in Ireland.'[1]

These first impressions were hardly encouraging. Auckland at this time, after returning from a visit to Pitt, at which Irish questions were much discussed, appears to have come to the conclusion that, while the system of government in Ireland must be changed, it would be better to be content with humbler measures than a legislative Union. 'The whole system of needy and illiterate, and disaffected papist priests,' he said, 'ought to be put down;' a respectable and responsible priesthood should be endowed from the public purse; and something might perhaps be done to relieve the Catholics from their tithe grievances, but a legislative Union was a matter 'of great difficulty in the arrangement, of greater difficulty in the execution, and after all precarious in its consequences,' and it is plain that Auckland would at this time have gladly relinquished the idea. George Rose, who was one of the few men intimately consulted by Pitt, was decidedly of opinion, that although a new arrangement between England and Ireland would be in itself desirable, the difficulties of carrying it in the existing circumstances were insuperable. Lord Carlisle, who had been Lord Lieutenant when the now ebbing flood of Irish nationality was rising to a spring tide height in 1782, wrote to Auckland a curious, anxious, hesitating letter on the subject. This he thought was a moment when much might be done, as, for the first time, a conviction had grown up in Ireland that their old Government was insufficient for their own safety and protection. 'Dare you,' he continued, 'in this agitated sea of public affairs, turn towards the bold expedient of Union? It seems the most unfit hour for any busi-

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, ii. 414, 415.

ness that requires so much new thought and addition of labour, and yet it is perhaps the only hour that Ireland could be found practicable on the subject.' He speaks of the terrible evils that had grown up through the faults of English administration in Ireland; through the jobbing and corruption of the chief people in that country; through the neglect of duty by the absentees, and through the extreme poverty of some of the lower orders, which made them ready to promote the most desperate schemes. 'Something new,' he said, 'must be attempted. I know no hand or head more equal to a bold experiment than Mr. Pitt's. Ireland in its present state will pull down England. She is a ship on fire, and must either be cast off or extinguished.'[1]

A strong will and intellect, however, was now applied to the wavering councils of the Government. On October 8, Lord Clare sailed for England to visit Pitt at Holwood, and to discuss with him the future government of Ireland. He went, Lord Cornwallis writes, 'with the thorough conviction that unless an Union between Great Britain and Ireland can be effected, there remains but little hope that the connection between the two countries will long subsist;'[2] but he went also with the firm resolve that a measure of Catholic emancipation should form no part of the scheme.

Cornwallis reluctantly acquiesced, but he deplored deeply the course which the question seemed likely to take. He wrote earnestly to Pitt, that it would be a desperate measure to make an irrevocable alliance with the small ascendency party in Ireland; but assuming that this was not to be done, and that the question of Catholic emancipation was merely postponed until after the Union, he implored him to consider 'whether an Union with the Protestants will afford a temporary respite from the spirit of faction and rebellion which so universally pervades this island, and whether the Catholics will patiently wait for what is called their emancipation, from the justice of the United Parliament.' 'If we are to reason,' he continues, 'on the future from the past, I should think that most people would answer these questions in the negative; . . . if it is in contemplation ever to extend

[1] *Auckland Correspondence*, iv. 42, 51, 52, 61. (These letters were written in August and October.)

[2] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, ii. 416.

the privileges of the Union to the Roman Catholics, the present appears to be the only opportunity which the British Ministry can have of obtaining any credit from the boon, which must otherwise in a short time be extorted from them.'[1] In a confidential letter to Pelham, which has never been published, he went still further, and his language is exceedingly remarkable. 'I am apprehensive,' he said, 'that an Union between Great Britain and the Protestants in Ireland is not likely to do us much good. I am sensible that it is the easiest point to carry, but I begin to have great doubts whether it will not prove an insuperable bar, instead of being a step, towards the admission of Catholics, which is the only measure that can give permanent tranquillity to this wretched country.'[2]

It must be observed, that during all this period there is not the smallest trace of Cornwallis being aware of the conscientious objections which the King entertained to the admission of Catholics even into an Imperial Legislature, nor does it appear that the King knew anything of the conferences that were going on. Lord Clare, in the short period which he spent with Pitt, fully attained his double object of confirming Pitt's opinion in favour of the Union, and of convincing him that it must be unaccompanied with emancipation. He found the Ministry, he said, 'full of popish projects,' but he trusted that he had fully determined them 'to bring the measure forward unencumbered with the doctrines of emancipation.' 'Mr. Pitt,' he said, 'is decided upon it, and I think he will keep his colleagues steady.'[3]

Dundas appears at this time, as in 1793, to have been much

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, ii. 418, 419.

[2] Cornwallis to Pelham, Oct. 15, 1798. (*Pelham MSS.*)

[3] *Auckland Correspondence*, iv. 60, 61. Auckland writes to Cooke: 'Mr. Pitt went on Friday to Lord Grenville's to meet Lord Clare, who was to proceed yesterday towards Holyhead. Mr. Pitt had prepared the sketch of an outline for a plan of Union, subject, of course, to discussion and almost certain alteration, and he meant, after correcting and improving it at Holwood, to have a copy sent to the Lord Lieutenant, as a basis for communications with leading people. For fuller particulars I must refer you to Lord Clare, who is allowed by all here to be equally pleasant and efficient as a co-operator in difficult businesses, going through the whole in a cordial and manly way, without any of those reserves, suspicions, implied pretensions and coldnesses, which too much affect the very able mind of another very able man. We have tried to make use of your suggestion as to the lot and ballot, so as to avoid the very embarrassing affair of compensations. How might it be something to the following effect?—The Counties, 32; Dublin, 2; University, 1; Cork, Waterford, Drogheda, Wexford, Kilkenny, Limerick, Derry, Belfast, Newry, 9; each of the remaining 107

more warmly in favour of the Catholics than Pitt, and there is a very significant allusion to this in one of the letters of Cornwallis. 'Had Mr. Dundas been in town,' he writes, 'before the Chancellor went over, he might perhaps have been able to carry the point of establishing the Union on a broad and comprehensive line; but things have now gone too far to admit of a change, and the principal persons in this country have received assurances from the English Ministers, which cannot be retracted.'[1]

These words were written in the middle of November, and it was early in that month that the intended scheme was first cautiously revealed to a few leading persons in Ireland. Cornwallis said, that as much opposition must be expected to it in the Irish Parliament whatever shape it might assume, it was necessary, as soon as the main principles were agreed on, to communicate them to the chief friends of Government, and he added, that he had himself so carefully avoided giving offence, that he believed that no person of much political consequence was hostile to his Government except the Speaker.[2] Most of the canvassing in this month naturally took place in Ireland, but three conspicuous Irishmen were in England, and with them Pitt personally communicated. Of these, Foster, the Speaker, was by far the ablest. Pitt found him 'perfectly cordial and communicative;' 'strongly against the measure of an Union (particularly at the present moment), yet perfectly ready to discuss the point fairly.' Pitt hoped—as the event showed, without reason—that Foster might be bribed, and he was prepared to offer him an English peerage with, if possible, some ostensible situation, as well as the life provision to which he would be entitled on vacating the chair. Beresford and Parnell he had also seen. Neither spoke very explicitly, but both appeared to dislike the measure, though Pitt hoped that both would acquiesce in it if it were fully resolved on. All three deprecated any authoritative announcement of the scheme until the leading individuals in Ireland had been consulted, and until steps had been taken for disposing the public mind. The success of the measure Pitt

places to return 1 member each, and from the 107 so returned, 50 to be chosen by lot and 6 by ballot—altogether 100 M.P.'s.' (Auckland to Cooke, Nov. 8, 1798, I.S.P.O.)

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, ii. 433, 434. See, too, on the opinions of Dundas, *Castlereagh Correspondence*, i. 431.

[2] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, ii. 427.

thought would depend altogether on the conduct of a few individuals in Ireland, and the Lord Lieutenant must do all in his power to win them over. Elliot had arrived in England to support the arguments of Lord Cornwallis in favour of admitting the Catholics to Parliament and office, but Pitt believed that such a measure at this time was completely impracticable. 'With respect to a provision,' he added, 'for the Catholic clergy, and some arrangement respecting tithes, I am happy to find a uniform opinion in favour of the proposal among all the Irish I have seen; and I am more and more convinced that these measures, with some effectual mode to enforce the residence of all ranks of the Protestant clergy, offer the best chance of gradually putting an end to the evils most felt in Ireland.'[1]

Cornwallis and Castlereagh communicated, as they were directed, confidentially, with several leading Irish politicians, and they were much encouraged by the result. Lord Shannon and Lord Ely, who were two of the greatest borough owners in Ireland, gave very favourable replies. The first was 'impressed in the strongest manner with the difficulties and disadvantages of the present system,' and 'disposed to entertain the measure favourably,' though he refused at this stage openly to declare himself. The second, 'relying on the favour of the Crown in an object personal to himself,'[2] 'was prepared to give it his utmost support.' Lord Pery, who had for fourteen years been Speaker, strongly doubted the wisdom of the measure in itself, and not less strongly the wisdom of bringing it forward in a time like the present, but he said he would not hastily pledge himself against it, and that if he found the measure to be really desired by Parliament and the country, 'he would feel it his duty to surrender his own opinion, and give it his best assistance in the detail.' Lord Yelverton, who had played such a great part in the emancipation of the Irish Parliament, was fully in favour of the Union. Conolly, a member of great influence, who represented the county of Derry, and who was one of the few Irishmen who had at the same time a seat in the Irish and in the English House of Commons, declared that he had always desired

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, ii. 439-441. Wilberforce about this time noticed that he found Pitt 'extremely favourable to the idea of an Union with Ireland.' (*Life of Wilberforce*, ii. 318.)

[2] He was made an English peer and a marquis when the Union was carried.

a legislative Union. The Attorney-General and the Solicitor-General were quite prepared to give their services. Lord Kilwarden and Lord Carleton doubted and hesitated, but did not decidedly oppose. The Duke of Leinster, who since the attainder of his brother was naturally altogether alienated from the Government, was consulted, but refused to give any opinion. Corry was very favourable; Sir John Blaquiere was 'disposed to be practicable.' The Speaker was very adverse, and his 'weight will be prodigious,' but, at the same time, both Cornwallis and Castlereagh believed that the measure could be carried through Parliament, with no great difficulty. 'I have great apprehensions,' added Cornwallis, 'of the inefficacy of it after it is carried, and I do not think it would have been much more difficult to have included the Catholics.'[1]

A few opinions from active magistrates and from other men who had always been warm supporters of the Government, about the same time came in. Sir George Hill writes from Derry, 'People have not yet spoken much out on the subject' [of an Union], 'but they are evidently inimical to the measure, and with the slightest encouragement would violently express themselves.' 'A mischievous person could with ease excite a universal and dangerous clamour, by descanting on the supposed disadvantages of it. It is high time, if such a measure be determined upon, that the most confidential friends of Government were instructed to prepare the public mind for the adoption of it, for be assured, if it is suddenly proposed and *forced*, it will be the foundation of endless calamity.' For his own part, Sir George Hill said, his leaning was strongly against it. Some considerable change he admitted was required, but he believed that the settlement of the Catholic question, the Regency, the commercial regulations, and perhaps an increase in the proportion paid by Ireland for the protection of the Empire, might all be accomplished without an Union.[2] Sir George Shee writes that he was himself in favour of an Union, but he found that people were in

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, ii. 441, 442, 448–451; Castlereagh to Wickham, Nov. 23, 1798. A part of this last letter (which is in the Record Office) is omitted in the printed *Cornwallis Correspondence*. Sir J. Blaquiere, Cornwallis says in another letter, will give great assistance to the Union. He wants a peerage for his help, which Cornwallis hopes will be given. (Cornwallis to Portland, Jan. 4, 1799.)

[2] Sir G. Hill to Cooke, Nov. 12, 15, 1798. (I.S.P.O.)

general opposed to it.[1] Colonel Crawford considered it absolutely necessary to the security and prosperity of Ireland. It would bring English capital largely into the country, and it would render possible the great measure of Catholic emancipation, which could never be safely granted with a separate Parliament, for 'the influence of property could not stand against the enthusiasm and ambitious aims of Catholics and Democrats.' 'The people of this country,' he added, 'never will and never can be contented until some means are devised of lessening the tithes, nor will they cease to be urged on to opposition by their priests, until some measures are adopted to attach the priests and Catholic clergy (*sic*) to the present order of things, by giving them an interest in its preservation.'[2] Cooke writes to Pelham very despondingly: 'The sectaries are very rancorous against each other, and amongst the lower classes much malignant revenge prevails, and the humour in the upper classes is as bad. . . . I do not think the idea of Union popular with the Protestants. There is some inclination to it among the Catholics, possibly because the Protestants are adverse. . . . The Parliament at present is extremely loose.'[3]

The disposition of Parliament and the disposition of the country were two very different things. The influence of the Government in the former was so overwhelming that, for many years, opposition had almost wholly disappeared, and the support of a very small number of great borough owners was at all times sufficient to outweigh the free constituencies. The Government, however, were anxious not to introduce their measure without obtaining some real popular support, and one of the most difficult and most delicate tasks of the historian of the Union is to estimate the amount of their success.

It is remarkable that their intention was first intimated in newspapers that were opposed to them. On October 16, the following paragraph appeared in the principal Dublin newspaper, supporting them. 'A most insidious and unadvised rumour of an intended Union with Great Britain has been set afloat by the Jacobin prints of this city, in order to do the

[1] Sir G. Shee to Pelham, Nov. 11, 1798. (*Pelham MSS.*)

[2] Colonel R. Crawford to Wickham, Nov. 19, 1798. (R.O.)

[3] Cooke to Pelham, Nov. 9, 1798. (*Pelham MSS.*)

little mischief which remains in their power to achieve. . . . Perilous and perplexed would be the discussion of so momentous a question at any period; but at this time of convulsion, the dangers with which it would be attended are too fearful for contemplation.' A month later the same newspaper again expressed its entire disbelief in the rumours of an Union which English and Irish newspapers ('chiefly those of Jacobinical complexion') had for some time past been disseminating, but ten days afterwards it inserted a notice which had appeared in the English 'Times' of November 22, stating that an Union would be brought forward, and added that it had reason to believe this paragraph to be true.[1]

If the judgment I have formed be correct, the public opinion of Ireland up to the beginning of the French war was practically unanimous in opposition to any scheme of Union, and it ran so strongly that no such proposal could have been made without the most imminent danger. In the period between 1793 and the outbreak of the rebellion, the Irish Parliament had been much discredited, and the alarms and dangers of the time had shaken many, but still there was no Irish party which would have ventured openly to support an Union. But the scenes of horror which were comprised in the six weeks of the rebellion had produced a great change in the political aspect of Ireland, and the Government calculated that if they pressed on the Union without delay, they would find two strong, broad currents of genuine opinion in its favour.

One of these sprang from the alarm of the Protestants for their Church, their property, and even their lives; from their conviction that their safety depended wholly upon the presence of a great English force, and that it was therefore their most vital interest to bind themselves as closely as possible to their protector. The other grew out of the resentment, the panic, and the hopes of the Catholics, who found an insulting and lawless spirit of Orange ascendency spreading on all sides, and the bitterest enemies of the Catholic cause supreme in the Parliament. The hope of passing under a more tolerant rule, the gratification of humiliating those who had humiliated them, the anger which was naturally produced by the burning of chapels and houses,

[1] *Faulkner's Journal*, Oct. 16, Nov. 17, 27, 1798.

and by the Orange badges that were flaunted on every side, and the prospect of obtaining from the Imperial Parliament the emancipation which appeared more and more remote in the Parliament of Ireland, had given many Catholic minds an undoubted bias in favour of the Union.

Of these two currents of opinion, the former was by far the weaker, and there are many indications that all classes of Irish Protestants were greatly irritated by a kind of argument which was at this time much used. English Ministers were extremely desirous of impressing upon them, that the power and the troops of England alone stood between them and destruction. 'Is this a time,' writes Sir George Shee, 'to talk of national pride, when we have not the means within ourselves of repelling any attack deserving the name of invasion; when our revenue is scarcely equal to two months' expenses on a war establishment; when fifteen out of twenty of our countrymen in general are sworn rebels; when the fidelity of a part of our army is at least doubtful; when the higher classes have lost the sway which ought to attach to their rank and station; when even the Legislature is held in disesteem; when experience has just proved that a rebellion of three counties only, can with great difficulty be put down; when we have such an enemy as the French Republic to contend with?'[1] Such arguments were not soothing to the national pride. Castlereagh, as we have seen, urgently desired that the Irish Protestants should be brought to attribute the suppression of the rebellion mainly to English aid, but Cornwallis complained that even Lord Clare 'did not appear to feel sufficiently how absolutely dependent the Protestants at present are on the support of Britain.'[2]

The aspect in which this question presented itself to the members of the ascendant creed can be easily understood. Ireland, it must be remembered, had never been like the American colonies, which refused to support an army for their own protection, and for the general assistance of the Empire. Twelve thousand and afterwards fifteen thousand men had been regularly maintained by the Irish Parliament. During the whole of the eighteenth century before the war of 1793 Ireland had contributed

[1] Sir G. Shee to Pelham, Nov. 11, 1798. These are the arguments which Sir G. Shee says he had been using in favour of the Union.

[2] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, ii. 416.

largely, and liberally, and much beyond the stipulated proportion, to the support of English wars undertaken for objects of English policy, while crowds of Irish recruits had filled the British army and the British fleet. For the very first time in the course of the century, the parts had been reversed. The Irish loyalists had been compelled to ask for English assistance upon land, and this obligation was at once pressed upon them with a most ungracious insistence as an argument for demanding the surrender of their Legislature.

And had the obligations of the Irish Protestants to English assistance been in truth so very great? In 1779, while multitudes of Irishmen were fighting English battles in other lands, and when the dangers of a French invasion were extreme, Ireland found herself almost denuded of troops, and compelled to rely for her security on the great volunteer movement which had been hastily organised by the Protestant gentry. In 1796 the boasted protection of the British fleet had not prevented a French fleet from lying for a week unmolested in an Irish bay, and nothing but the accident of the weather saved Ireland from a most formidable invasion. Even during the recent rebellion, had the part played by England been so transcendent? During all the earlier and more dangerous period, in spite of the pressing and repeated entreaties and the bitter complaints of the Irish Government, the loyalists of Ireland had been left entirely unaided. The few English regiments which were then in Ireland, were there in exchange for Irish regiments. Until after the battle of New Ross, no succour had arrived, and the suppression of the rebellion had been left to Irish resources, and mainly to the Irish yeomanry and militia. It is true that after that time an overwhelming stream of English troops had poured in, but they arrived only when the crisis had passed, and the rebellion had been effectually broken.[1]

[1] No one has shown this more clearly than Duigenan, who was a warm advocate of the Union. 'The rebellion,' he says, broke out 'on the 23rd of May, 1798. The whole regular army, the militia and the yeomanry then in the kingdom, were the proper forces of Ireland, and paid by Ireland. Most of the regular troops had, at different periods before, been sent out of the kingdom on foreign service, and their places supplied by fencible regiments, many of them Scotch; but as these troops were paid by the Irish treasury, and were sent in lieu of the Irish trained troops employed on foreign expeditions, I do not account them British troops sent to our assistance.' He proceeds to enumerate the battles which had been fought

It was asked, too, what were the causes which had made the state of Ireland so perilous, that those who administered its affairs were obliged for the first time in the eighteenth century to call for English assistance on land. Every foreign danger to which Ireland was exposed was confessedly due to English quarrels; and Irish Protestants, who differed utterly in their own principles, agreed in attributing a great part of the internal anarchy, which had lately become so formidable, to English policy. The old champions of Protestant ascendency, whether they held the opinions of Clare or the more liberal opinions of Flood and Charlemont, pointed to the success of a purely Protestant Government. Whatever might have been its faults, it had at least this incontestable merit, that for about eighty years of the century, English statesmen might have almost wholly dismissed Ireland and Irish concerns from their thoughts. Ireland had scarcely been more troublesome than if it had been an island in the Pacific, and it had been as free from active sedition and rebellion as Cornwall or Devonshire. Great changes had afterwards occurred, but the Protestant party attributed the anarchy that now prevailed mainly to the Catholic Act of 1793, which had broken the power of the ruling class and thrown open the door to revolutionary innovations. But the concession of the Catholic suffrage had been an English measure, forced by English intervention on a reluctant Administration, and carried in spite of the earnest protests and the repeated warnings of Foster and Clare.

From the opposite quarter of the political compass, the Protestants who followed Grattan had come to a very similar conclusion. They attributed the present condition of Ireland to the obstinacy with which a Government appointed by England had resisted parliamentary reform, and Catholic emancipation, and the commutation of tithes; to the recall of Lord Fitzwilliam after he had been suffered to raise the hopes of the

before English troops arrived, and concludes, 'The dates of each memorable action in this short but bloody and wasteful rebellion are noted, to prove that the suppression of it was effected solely by the troops, militia and yeomanry of Ireland, without any assistance whatever from England.' (Duigenan's *Present Political State of Ireland*, pp. 85, 92.) See, too, in this volume, pp. 141, 142. A most powerful statement of the case, in one of the speeches of Bushe against the Union, will be found in Plunket's *Life*, ii. 357, 358.

Catholics to the utmost; to the stimulus given to religious dissension when the Government deliberately evoked the Protestant spirit in opposition to the Catholic claims; to the intolerable violence and outrage that had accompanied the process of disarming. These things did not, they admitted, introduce the first seeds of sedition into Ireland, but they had prepared the soil for the portentous rapidity of its growth, and they were the chief causes of the desperate condition to which the country had been reduced.

Under these circumstances, there was a very sullen and resentful spirit among the Irish Protestants when the intended Union was announced. The great preponderance of Protestant feeling appears at this time to have been clearly against the scheme, and if war had not been raging and invasion probable, the preponderance would have been overwhelming. The extreme danger of the situation, however, had undoubtedly converted some, and shaken the opposition of many.

Among the Catholics, the first impressions were much more favourable. The deposition of a governing and now a hostile sect was not without its charm, and the Union promised the speedy accomplishment of cherished objects. Some of the Catholic prelates, and especially Dr. Troy, the Archbishop of Dublin, from the beginning declared themselves warmly in favour of the scheme. They would no doubt gladly have seen Catholic emancipation incorporated in the Union, but, 'from what I learn,' writes Cornwallis, 'the present measure is not likely to be opposed by the Catholics. They consider any change better than the present system.'[1] 'There appears no indisposition on the part of the leading Catholics,' writes Castlereagh in November; 'on the contrary, I believe they will consider any transfer of power from their opponents as a boon. I should hope the proposed arrangement for the Catholic clergy will reconcile that body. Dr. Troy is perfectly well inclined.'[2] There seems to have been some question of inserting in the Act of Union, a clause maintaining the exclusively Protestant character of the Legislature, but both Cornwallis and the English Ministers declared that the competence of the Imperial Legislature to alter the oath must be expressly reserved, and it

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, ii. 434. [2] Ibid. pp. 443, 444.

was agreed that it was essential to the peace of Ireland that tithes should be commuted and reduced, and that a competent provision should be assigned from the State to the Catholic clergy.[1] It was from the Catholic province of Munster, and especially from the city of Cork, that the Government expected most support. Cork was at this time the second city in Ireland, and it was long and widely believed that a legislative Union would be as favourable to its progress as the Scotch Union had proved to the development of Glasgow.[2]

The Government were anxious not to rely solely on borough votes, and they did all in their power to influence the dispositions of the people. 'The principal provincial newspapers,' writes Castlereagh in November, 'have been secured, and every attention will be paid to the press generally.'[3] 'Already,' he writes a little later, 'we feel the want, and, indeed, the absolute necessity of the *primum mobile*. We cannot give that activity to the press which is requisite.' 'I cannot help most earnestly requesting to receive 5,000*l*. in bank notes by the first messenger.'[4] As the payment of the Catholic priests was intended to purchase the assistance of that body, so it was hoped that the promise of some additional provision would disarm the opposition, if it did not secure the support of the Presbyterian ministers.[5] Slight augmentations had already taken place in 1784 and 1792, and about this time the negotiations began which resulted in the considerable enlargement and rearrangement of the Regium Donum in 1803.[6] The attitude

[1] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, i. 379, 380–393.

[2] This belief (which had a great effect on Catholic opinion about the Union) was a very old one. In one of Langrishe's letters, written in 1768, Hely Hutchinson is accused of aiming at an Union. 'By reducing us to become a province only of another kingdom, he hopes to recommend himself to a seat in that senate, where he vainly imagines that his parts, but not impossibly his arts, may soon render him considerable. And this would certainly much endear him to that city which he represents at present [Cork]. Should an Union between Barataria and La Mancha [Ireland and England] once prevail, that port would necessarily become soon the metropolis of this island, and reduce our present capital to a fishing village.' (*Baratariana*, p. 34.)

[3] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, ii. 444.

[4] Ibid. iii. 27. A few days later Castlereagh acknowledged the reply. 'The contents of the messenger's despatches are very interesting. Arrangements with a view to further communications of the same nature will be highly advantageous, and the Duke of Portland may depend on their being carefully applied.' (Ibid. p. 34.)

[5] Ibid. ii. 444.

[6] Killen's *Continuation of Reid's History of Presbyterianism in Ireland*, iii. 509–522. See, too, *Castlereagh*

of Ulster was regarded with extreme apprehension, but also with some hope. The United Irish movement, which had its chief seat in this province, was essentially a revolt against the Irish Parliament. But Ulster republicanism had been suddenly checked when the horrors of the Wexford rebellion showed what an independent and popish Ireland was likely to be, and Castlereagh thought it possible that many of the Republican party would now accept an Union as a compromise.[1] Wolfe Tone had from the first devoted all the resources of his powerful rhetoric to expressing his detestation of the Irish Parliament; he had taught consistently that the only real and final alternative for Ireland was Separation or Union,[2] and although it does not appear that many of the United Irishmen took the turn for which Castlereagh hoped, it is remarkable that Hamilton Rowan, who was one of the most important of them, was not only decidedly but enthusiastically in favour of the Union. 'In that measure,' he writes, 'I see the downfall of one of the most corrupt assemblies I believe ever existed, and instead of an empty title, a source of industrious enterprise for the people, and the wreck of feudal aristocracy.' 'It takes a feather out of the great man's cap; but it will, I think, put many a guinea in the poor man's pocket.'[3] Neilson also, though he never appears to have given up his wish for a

Correspondence, ii. 384. A scheme for establishing a new university in Armagh, chiefly for the benefit of the Dissenters, was under consideration in 1799, but was ultimately abandoned. The grounds on which the Duke of Portland principally objected to it, are curious and significant. He thought that it was not desirable to stimulate Dublin University by the emulation of a second university, as the students in Trinity College were already too apt to injure their health by overwork; and he also thought it very desirable that, after the Union, the higher order of Irishmen should be educated as much as possible in England, or (if they were Presbyterians) in Scotland. See *Castlereagh Correspondence*, ii. 364, 365, 382–384.

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, ii. 444.

[2] E.g. The following passage occurs in *An Address to the People of Ireland* (1796), which was brought over by Hoche. 'The alternative which is now submitted to your choice with regard to England is, in one word, Union or Separation. You must determine, and that instantly, between slavery and independence. There is no third way.' (Tone's *Memoirs*, ii. 275.)

[3] Rowan's *Autobiography*, p. 340. This was written in Jan. 1799, and Rowan says he had long held this opinion. Mrs. Rowan, who appears from her letters to have been a woman of very superior intellect and character, altogether differed from her husband's politics. She was completely opposed to his sedition, and she regarded the Union with extreme dislike. (Ibid. p. 338.) This is all the more remarkable, as Lord Clare appears to have had a great regard for her, and showed her much kindness.

complete separation of the two countries, expressed his gratification at the Union as a measure which must benefit Ireland commercially, and could not injure her politically.[1]

There were two other motives operating in Ulster which were favourable to the Union. The free trade with England, which was expected to follow it, was certain to give a great impulse to the linen manufactures of Ulster, and Bishop Percy has noticed that among these manufacturers there was from the beginning a party devoted to the Union. In the Presbyterian North, too, even more than in the other provinces, tithe legislation was imperatively demanded. 'As a measure connected with the Union,' writes Castlereagh, 'nothing would engage the great body of the people of all persuasions so certainly in its support, as coupling it with a regulation of tithes, which in this country has always been the first substantive object to which all reformers looked.'[2] It was ultimately decided not to connect a tithe Bill with the Union, but one of the most effectual arguments used by its partisans was the certainty that a tithe Bill would immediately follow it.

The Government were now extremely desirous that a full statement of the case for the Union should be laid before the Irish public. The task of drawing it up was assigned to the Under Secretary, Cooke. His pamphlet seems to have been revised before publication by some leading public men;[3] and although it appeared anonymously,[4] it was at once recognised as the official statement of the case, and it passed speedily through many editions. Part of it consists of somewhat general reasonings on the advantages of political Union. He dwelt upon the benefits which had resulted from the union of Wales and Scotland with England; upon the necessity the American colonies found of drawing themselves together more closely by the Constitution of

[1] See his letter to his wife, Madden's *United Irishmen*, iv. 105, 106. Dr. Madden, without, I think, any good reason, questions Neilson's sincerity.

[2] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, ii. 444.

[3] Lord Buckingham, in a letter to Cooke congratulating him on his pamphlet, suggests an argument from the American Constitution which is employed in it, and adds, 'I wish you (though you keep the sentiment) to leave out the name of Dr. Troy, for he is most eagerly and violently with you on this question, and would probably not be much flattered by being thus held out to exhibition.' Troy's name does not appear in the published pamphlet. (Buckingham to Cooke, Nov. 22, 1798.)

[4] *Arguments for and against an Union between Great Britain and Ireland.*

1787; upon the immense and dangerous preponderance France had acquired in Europe through the complete fusion of the many states which originally composed it; upon the strong arguments in favour of Union derived from the present almost desperate condition of Europe. France had succeeded in incorporating, subduing, or influencing all the small countries about her. Geneva, Savoy, the Austrian provinces of Flanders, the German States on the left bank of the Rhine, had been incorporated with her. Spain only moved at her dictation. Holland, Switzerland, Sardinia, and the new Republic of Italy were occupied by her armies. England was now the last solid barrier of the liberties of Europe. Was it probable that she could have so long resisted the concentrated power of France, if Scotland had still been a half-separated kingdom, exposed as she had once been to incessant French intrigues? Was it likely that she would long be able to resist, if the constantly increasing power of France were met by no corresponding increase and consolidation of the British Empire?

If the Union of independent countries was a source of strength and prosperity, much more so would such an Union be as that which was now proposed. What, it was asked, is now the boasted independence of Ireland? The crown of Ireland depends on that of England, and the King of Ireland necessarily resides in England. The counsels of the Government of Ireland are framed in the British Cabinet. The Government of Ireland is administered by a British Lord Lieutenant and Secretary, appointed by the Ministry in England, acting under their instructions and distributing the patronage of the Crown. No measure of the Irish Parliament can become law without the licence of a British minister, for it must receive the royal sanction, attested by the Great Seal of Britain, which is in his custody. In all questions which concern alliances, the declaration and conduct of war or the negotiations for peace, Ireland is a completely subject State. She has no communication with foreign Powers except through British diplomatists. Her Parliament is supposed to be in a great measure subservient to British influence.[1] Such a situation naturally produces constant jealousies, and furnishes a perpetual

[1] See the powerful statement of Lord Castlereagh (Coote's *History of the Union*, pp. 339, 340).

topic of complaint and invective to the newspapers and the parliamentary Opposition. But how, under its present Constitution, could it be avoided? 'So long as we form part of the British Empire, we must acknowledge one executive power, one presiding Cabinet, and it is of indispensable necessity for that Cabinet to induce every part of the Empire to pursue the same principles of action, and to adopt the same system of measures, as far as possible; and as the interests of England must ever preponderate, a preference will always be given to her, or supposed to be given.' If the two Parliaments act together, that of Ireland will always be said to be meanly and corruptly subservient to the British Cabinet. If they diverge, they may most seriously weaken the strength of the Empire. The Parliament of Ireland may exhort the King to make war when the views of England are pacific. It may oppose wars in which England is engaged, declare against treaties which England has made, and refuse to ratify commercial articles. It has actually asserted a right to choose a Regent of its own appointment, distinct from the Regent of England.

'Add to this the melancholy reflection, that the Irish Parliament has been long made the theatre for British faction. When at a loss for subjects of grievance in Great Britain, they ever turn their eyes to this kingdom, in the kind hope that any seed of discontent may be nourished by their fostering attention into strength and maturity. . . . We have seen the leaders of the British Opposition come forward to support the character of Irish rebels, to palliate and to justify Irish treason, and almost to vindicate Irish rebellion.'

All this, in the opinion of the writer, would end with a legislative Union. It is true that absenteeism might somewhat increase, and London might be somewhat more than at present the centre of Irish affairs; but 'the British Cabinet would receive a mixture of Irishmen, and the counsels of the British Parliament would be much influenced by the weight and ability of the Irish members. All our party contests would be transferred to Great Britain. British faction would cease to operate here. . . . France could no longer speculate on the nature of our distinct Government and Parliament, and hope to separate the kingdom from Great Britain.' Ireland would be placed for ever on an equality with Great Britain. All danger of her subjection, all danger of

partial laws by the British Parliament, would be at an end. 'We shall have full security that the British United Parliament will never injure Ireland, because it must at the same time injure Great Britain.' The development of the material resources of Ireland would become a special object of Imperial policy, and increasing loyalty would naturally follow increasing prosperity.

That such an increase of prosperity would follow the Union, appeared to Cooke hardly doubtful. When two countries differing widely in their industrial, commercial, agricultural, and moral development are identified in government, policy, and interests, they will inevitably tend to the same level. English capital will naturally find its employment in the undeveloped resources of Ireland. Cork is already the emporium of provisions for the British navy, and the refuge for all homeward-bound convoys in time of war when the Channel is unsafe. If the Union be carried, there is little doubt that it will be converted into a great maritime station, with dockyards like those of Plymouth and Portsmouth. Landed property, which in England sells in time of peace at from thirty to forty years' purchase, in Ireland seldom exceeds twenty years' purchase; but with the increased security and order which the Union would produce, the value of Irish estates will gradually rise to the English level. Ulster will gain complete security for her staple manufacture of linen. Already, it is true, that manufacture is encouraged by English laws, but these laws might at any time be repealed or changed. By an Union they will be fixed for ever.

The most important advantages, however, to be expected from the Union, were moral and political ones. In a remarkable page, to which I have already referred, Cooke acknowledged the immense progress that in the last twenty years Ireland had been making in population, agriculture, manufactures, and wealth. 'It is universally admitted, that no country in the world ever made such rapid advances as Ireland has done in these respects; yet all her accession of prosperity has been of no avail; discontent has kept pace with improvement; discord has grown up with our wealth; conspiracy and rebellion have shot up with our prosperity.'[1] The truth is, that the condition of Ireland is

[1] In the *Castlereagh Correspondence* there is a curious memorandum of Cooke on the arguments for the Union. In it he ascribes the present

essentially unnatural and precarious. Nine-tenths of the property of the country are in the possession of descendants of British Protestant settlers, very many of whom owe their position to the fortunes of civil war. The government of the country, the parliamentary representation, and the Church revenues are all in the hands of a small Protestant minority. As long as the Catholics were restrained by severe penal laws the kingdom was tranquil, and the tranquillity continued for nearly a century. But with the repeal of these restrictions the old rivalry reappeared; the Catholics soon demanded a change in the Constitution, which would have the effect of transferring to them all the powers of the State; and the doctrine was rapidly spreading throughout Europe, that in every country the religious establishment should be the Church of the majority.

As long as the Catholics were to the Protestants as three to one, this state of things was essentially anomalous; but in order to change it, the Acts of Supremacy and of Uniformity must be repealed, 'for nothing could be so absurd as to make men who deny the supremacy of the King, and the competency of the Parliament in ecclesiastical concerns, members of the supreme power, viz. the Legislature; and at the same time to subject these very men to the penalties of præmunire and treason for denying that supremacy and competency.' But if the Catholics are admitted into the Legislature, and the Test Oaths and the Act of Supremacy are repealed, the Protestant Establishment at once becomes a public wrong. At present this Establishment is defensible, 'because on principles of reason, and from the nature of a free Constitution, no religious sect can claim a right to be established or supported by the State which denies the competency of the State to regulate their conduct; but when that principle is abandoned, the defence of the Protestant Church Establishment is abandoned also.'

Nor would this be the only consequence. 'Admitting the Catholics to seats in the Legislature, and retaining the present

dangerous state of the country to six causes. 1. The local independent acting of the Legislature. 2. The *general prosperity of the country, which has produced great activity and energy.* 3. The emancipation of the Catholics. 4. The encouragement given to the reform principles of the Presbyterians. 5. The want of number in the Protestants. 6. The uncertainty of counsels as to this great division of the country. (*Castlereagh Correspondence*, iii. 55.)

parliamentary Constitution, would be like inviting a man to dinner, and on his acceptance of the invitation, shutting the door in his face.' Reform would necessarily follow emancipation, and it must end by taking the whole political power of the country from those who are the chief possessors of its landed property. Could the security of property survive such a revolution of power?

The only real safeguard against this danger lay in an Union. It would at once save the Empire from the great evil of an 'Imperium in imperio,' by giving it one Legislature, one supreme organ of the public will. It would place Ireland 'in a *natural* situation, for all the Protestants of the Empire being united, she would have the proportion of fourteen to three in favour of her Establishment, whereas at present there is a proportion of three to one against it.' 'If Ireland was once united to Great Britain by a legislative Union, and the maintenance of the Protestant Establishment was made a fundamental article of that Union, then the whole power of the Empire would be pledged to the Church Establishment of Ireland, and the property of the whole Empire would be pledged in support of the property of every part.'

These last arguments were addressed especially to the class who still constituted the Irish Parliament, and were the chief governing body in Ireland. Some of the other advantages, however, that have been enumerated applied in a very large measure to the Dissenters and to the Catholics, and special inducements were held out to each sect. The Catholics were told that all the privileges they had obtained from the Irish Parliament would be secured by the Union; that 'it may be advisable to connect with an Union a proper support for their clergy, and some system of regulation for their Church not inconsistent with their ecclesiastical principles;' and that 'an opening may be left in any plan of Union for the future admission of Catholics to additional privileges.' It will be observed, that no distinct prospect of their admission into the Legislature is held out in this pamphlet, but it was urged that the position of Catholics, both socially and politically, would be greatly improved when they were no longer legislated for under the influence of local prejudices, jealousies, or antipathies, and with that 'necessary State

partiality towards Protestants' which the present dangerous condition of Ireland produced. The Catholic South and West, were also the parts of Ireland which were likely to benefit most largely by the agricultural and commercial advantages of the Union. The Protestant Dissenters were told that their political importance would be increased when they were united with the Dissenting interests of Great Britain;[1] that further provision would be made for their ministers, and that a modus of tithes by which Dissenters and Catholics would be essentially relieved, would probably accompany an Union.

Such were the principal arguments and promises of this very important pamphlet, which first brought the question of the Union fully before the Irish public, and furnished most of its advocates with the substance of their speeches. The subject at once absorbed public attention almost to the exclusion of all others, and it is stated that before the end of the year 1798, no less than twenty-four pamphlets relating to it had already appeared.[2] In the interval before the meeting of the Irish Parliament, parties on each side were rapidly forming. The resignation which the Chief Secretary Pelham had long been pressing on the Government was at last accepted, and this important post was placed in the strong hands of Lord Castlereagh. The appointment had long been in consideration, and was strenuously supported by Cornwallis; but it encountered much opposition, chiefly, it appears, on the part of the King, who clung to the old rule that this office should always be held by an Englishman. Cornwallis acknowledged 'the propriety of the general rule,' but he said that Castlereagh was 'so very unlike an Irishman,' that he had a just claim to an exception in his favour.[3] The King gave his consent in the beginning of November. It is a somewhat remarkable fact that the first Irishman who was Chancellor, and the first Irishman who was Chief Secretary since the Revolution, were the two leading instruments in destroying the Irish Parliament.

The warning of Lord Harcourt, that a legislative Union ought

[1] It was replied to this with much force, that the Irish Dissenter was already politically in a better position than the English Dissenter, as the Test Act had been repealed in Ireland, but not in England.

[2] *Faulkner's Journal*, Dec. 27, 1798.

[3] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, i. 424–444; *Cornwallis Correspondence*, ii. 439.

never to be attempted unless the minds of the Irish had been long prepared, and unless the wish for it had come from them, had been completely neglected. The measure of Pitt was flashed suddenly upon the Irish public, on the eve of its introduction, and, if we except the confidential overtures from Clare, the whole initiative and idea of it came from England. The letters from the chief persons about the Government in the weeks between the disclosure of the scheme and its introduction into Parliament, are full of misgivings about the state of public opinion, and some of them of much complaint about Lord Cornwallis. Clare complained of his coldness and his reserve, and expressed grave fears about the House of Commons. 'Foster is impracticable, and Parnell now joins with him. If this should continue to be the case, and nothing effectual is done here to counteract it, I fear we shall have great difficulties to encounter.' 'In the House of Commons there is certainly no man who will be a match for Foster, if he chooses to persist in strong opposition to the measure.'[1] Camden thought that it would have been wiser 'to have received the voice and the conversation and the influence of some leading characters' in Ireland before starting the scheme as a Government measure, but that it was now too late to recede.[2] Near the end of November, however, it appeared to Elliot, who was one of the best and ablest officials of the Government, that the difficulties of the question had become so great, that it was not improbable that the project would be abandoned.[3]

Perhaps the best way of studying the public opinion on the subject, is to look separately at different classes. The first and in some respects the most important opposition, came from the bar. A great meeting was summoned on December 9, by Saurin, who was one of its most distinguished and most esteemed members. He belonged to an old Huguenot family, and was himself a man of strong Protestant principles and prejudices, and he was in after years, when Attorney-General, one of the most formidable opponents of O'Connell. The meeting appears to have included all that was eminent at the Irish bar, and after a very able debate, in which Saurin, Plunket, and Peter Burrowes displayed especial ability, a resolution was carried by 166 to 32,

[1] *Auckland Correspondence*, iv. 67, 70, 72, 74.
[2] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, i. 448, 449. [3] Ibid. ii. 9.

condemning the Union as 'an innovation which it would be highly dangerous and improper to propose at the present juncture.' The debate was at once published, and had much influence upon opinion; it was followed by many other pamphlets, chiefly written by lawyers, among which those of Goold, Jebb, and Bushe were probably the most remarkable, and they supplied the principal arguments in the subsequent debates.

For the most part, the opponents of the measure at this stage abstained from committing themselves to any general assertion that a legislative Union could at no time be expedient. They dilated especially upon the inexpediency of pressing it forward when the country was still torn by the convulsions of civil war; when it was impossible to take the full sense of the people; when the Habeas Corpus Act was suspended, and in the presence of an enormous English army.

Was this a time, they asked, when Ireland should be called upon to surrender the parliamentary Constitution under which, with all its imperfections, she had subsisted for 500 years; to hand over the government of the people to a Legislature in which the whole Irish representation would form only a small fraction, to extinguish for ever the Irish name and nationality? What were the inducements that were offered for such a step? Some of them were evidently of the nature of bribes, and were measures which were perfectly compatible with the existing system. What was there in the maintenance of an Irish Parliament to prevent the payment of the priests; or the additional payment of Dissenting ministers, or a commutation of tithes? Others were sure to be largely deceptive. The commercial advantages were especially insisted on. But it was acknowledged that Irish commerce and manufactures during the preceding twenty years had been advancing with a rapidity unexampled in their history, unsurpassed in any part of Europe. A Legislature, it was said, can assist commerce and manufactures chiefly in two ways. It may do so by protecting laws, granting bounties and monopolies, or it may do so by measures extending the sphere of commercial enterprise. The first right Ireland by the Union would absolutely surrender, and she would surrender it into the hands of a Legislature in which her most formidable rivals in the fields of commerce and manufactures are supreme. As a general rule, the

principle of protecting duties is a false one, 'but in our particular situation, contending with a small capital and an infant establishment against an old establishment and enormous capital, it is by protecting duties only that we can ever hope to gain that strength which may enable us, at length, to place our manufactures on equal terms.' Could anyone believe that such protection would be granted by an Imperial Parliament?

There remained, then, the new spheres of industry that might be opened by the Union. But that measure could give Ireland no greater liberty than she already possessed, of trading with the whole world outside the British Empire, and with the whole British Empire outside Great Britain. In the trade with Great Britain, it is true, Ireland suffered several disabilities, from which it had long been an object of Irish statesmen by fair negotiation to relieve her. But the two chief products of Ireland were already freely admitted. England might, no doubt, withdraw the encouragement she granted to Irish linens, but she would hardly do so as long as she could obtain her linens more cheaply from Ireland than from any other country, and she would certainly not shut her ports against Irish corn, for the importation of corn was necessary to her increased population, and Ireland was the one great granary which lay open at her door. On the other hand, sooner or later, the Union must bring a vast increase of taxation. A country with a debt of twelve millions, was asked to unite with a country with a debt of 500 millions. Provisions were, no doubt, promised for keeping separate exchequers, but was it not probable that the day would come, when these debts would be blended? Had not Adam Smith, the greatest of all the advocates of a legislative Union, expressly argued that the debts of the two countries should be amalgamated, and their taxation equalised? Was it not also certain that the master evil, Absenteeism, would be enormously increased? It was an evil which would not only diminish the material resources of Ireland, but would also in a large measure deprive her of the very class who could do most to 'command, reclaim, and soothe a wretched peasantry.' Yet there was no country in which, from its social and political circumstances, the constant guidance of a loyal, respectable, and intelligent class was more supremely important.

The opponents of the measure then proceeded to deal with the contention of Cooke, that a legislative Union was necessary to strengthen the connection, to guard against the dangers of invasion and separation. What, they asked, was the Irish Parliament which it was proposed to abolish? Was it not a governing body of tried, ardent, devoted loyalists, intimately acquainted with the circumstances of the country? With the single exception of the Regency question, it had never differed on a question of Imperial policy from the British Parliament, and a simple enactment would prevent the recurrence of a difficulty, which had only arisen from an omission in the law. Not one disaffected man of any real power or influence, had ever appeared in the Irish Parliament. Not one instance could be cited, in which the Irish Parliament had refused to support England in times of difficulty and danger. 'Never was any Parliament so zealous, so vigilant, so anxious, so scrutinising as the Irish Parliament on the occasion of the late rebellion. Not a breath or murmur of opposition was uttered against the strongest measures the Administration wished to adopt. Every additional weapon that the executive magistrate demanded, every guinea that he could require, was voted, not merely with cheerfulness, but with anticipating alacrity and without a single dissenting voice.' In the British Parliament, there was an active faction opposing the war, extenuating the rebellion, and censuring the measures by which it was repressed. In the Irish Parliament, not a man was found 'to palliate its crimes, or to refuse the necessary aid to the executive power.' Who, it was more than once asked, were the men who had put down the late most dangerous rebellion? Were they not the loyal gentlemen of Ireland, who had organised and led the yeomanry and the militia? And was it not this very class, which the Union was most likely to withdraw from Ireland, whose influence in Ireland it was most certain to diminish? If there is a danger of a separation from England, 'it is not at least from any disposition manifested by the gentry, by the property, by the Parliament of Ireland. If any such tendency prevail, it is among the lower classes of the people, corrupted by the empirics of the French school, whose poison can be best and perhaps solely counteracted by a resident gentry and a resident Parliament, who are

unalterably and without exception, and from the most unequivocal motives of self-interest, if there were nothing else to operate, bound to maintain the connection to the last extremity.'

The danger of invasion to which Ireland is exposed, it was said, springs in reality from two sources. The one is a geographical position, which no political measure can affect; the other is the disaffection which such a measure as was now contemplated would most seriously increase. 'Formed in the British Cabinet, unsolicited by the Irish nation,' passed in the middle of war, in the centre of a tremendous military force, under the influence of immediate personal danger,' this Union was not likely to be 'salutary in its nature or permanent in its duration.' It was said, 'that advantage should be taken of the passions that agitate and distract the minds of men at the close of a widely extended rebellion; that the intolerance of the Orangemen, the resentment of the excluded Catholics, the humiliation of the rebel, and the despairing apathy of the reformer, afford an opportunity not to be lost of effecting a revolution' which under normal circumstances would be impossible. Such a policy might for a time succeed, but it could not fail to be followed by the bitterest recriminations. It would 'multiply and invigorate the friends of the French connection; dishearten, alienate, and disgust the friends to the British interest,' and most materially weaken their hold upon their countrymen. 'Who are they,' it was asked, 'whose pride and consequence will be most humbled? The loyal and spirited yeomen and gentry who have fought and bled in support of our Constitution as it now stands.' 'The United Irishmen, I am told,' said Peter Burrowes, 'hold a jubilee of joy at this measure. They are its warmest advocates. They well know that their numbers will be increased;' and Plunket declared that 'he opposed the Union principally, because he was convinced that it would accelerate a total separation of the two countries.'

The parallel that was established between the Scotch Union and that which it was now desired to form, was strenuously disputed. The Scotch Parliament had legislated in such a manner that, without an Union, England and Scotland must have been legally and absolutely separated on the death of Queen Anne, and English statesmen had therefore an urgent

motive for pressing on the Scotch Union, which was wholly wanting in the case of Ireland. No two Parliaments indeed could be more dissimilar in their relations to England than the Scotch Parliament, which passed the Bill of Security, and the Irish Parliament, which suppressed the rebellion of 1798. Scotland, too, at the time of the Union had a population which was probably less than two millions. She was sunk in abject poverty. She had no considerable manufactures. She was excluded from the English colonies, and the cattle which were her only superfluity, were excluded from the English market. Her exports to the whole world on a four years' average scarcely exceeded 800,000*l.* The whole population of Edinburgh was little more than 30,000. Ireland at the close of the eighteenth century had 4,500,000, some writers say 5,000,000 inhabitants. She had the widest liberty of commerce. Her annual exports to England alone were at least 2,500,000*l.* Her capital, according to the best estimate,[1] contained more than 170,000 inhabitants, and she was advancing with acknowledged and gigantic strides on the path of material prosperity. It was added, too, that Scotland and England formed but a single island; that the progress of Scotland, which was attributed so exclusively to her Union, was not very marked till after the abolition of the hereditary jurisdictions in 1746, and that two Scotch rebellions were at least strengthened by the Union.

The doctrine which Grattan had maintained in 1785, of the incompetence of the Irish Parliament to carry a legislative Union, was now fully formulated, and it occupied a great part in the discussions on the measure. Sometimes it was stated as an absolute incompetence. The more cautious, however, of the disputants contented themselves with denying the right of the Parliament of Ireland to destroy its own existence, and transfer its powers to another Legislature, without the consent of the constituencies attested by a dissolution. This doctrine was supported by the express statement of Locke, the most recognised and authoritative exponent of the British Constitution as established and reformed at the Revolution. 'The Legislative,'

[1] Whitelaw, after a careful investigation, estimated the population of Dublin in 1798 at 172,091. See Warburton's *Hist. of Dublin*, Appendix No. 1.

he wrote, 'cannot transfer the power of making laws to any other hands. For it being but a delegated power from the people, they who have it cannot pass it over to others. The people alone can appoint the form of the Commonwealth, which is by constituting the Legislative, and appointing in whose hands that shall be. . . . The power of the Legislative being derived from the people by a positive voluntary grant and institution, can be no other than what that positive grant conveyed, which being only to make laws and not legislators, the Legislative can have no power to transfer their authority of making laws, and place it in other hands. . . . The Legislative neither must nor can transfer the power of making laws to anybody else, or place it anywhere but where the people have.' 'Governments are dissolved from within when the Legislative is altered. . . . The Constitution of the Legislative is the first and fundamental act of the Society; whereby provision is made for the continuation of their Union, under the direction of persons and bonds of laws made by persons authorised thereunto by the consent and appointment of the people, without which no one man or number of men amongst them can have authority of making laws that shall be binding to the rest. When any one or more shall take upon them to make laws whom the people have not appointed so to do, they make laws without authority, and the people are not therefore bound to obey.'[1] The conduct of the British Parliament of 1716, which, having been elected by its constituents for three years, not only exercised its legitimate power by making future Parliaments septennial, but also by its own authority prolonged its own term of office for four years beyond the time for which it had been elected, was described as essentially and grossly unconstitutional. On the other hand, the conduct of American statesmen was appealed to as an example. When Constitution of the United States was remodelled in 1787, and a large share of power transferred from the State Legislatures to the Congress, a convention was specially elected by the people to accomplish this change by their direct authority.

On the strength of such a doctrine, language of the most

[1] Locke *On Government*, book ii. ch. xi., xix. Grattan, in one of his speeches on the Union, quoted passages to much the same effect from Puffendorf, Grotius, the managers of the Sacheverell prosecution, and Junius. (Grattan's *Speeches*, iii. 386–389.)

serious and menacing character was employed. 'I hold it to be indisputably certain,' said Peter Burrowes, 'that the ancient established Constitution of a nation like this cannot be justifiably annihilated without the previous consent of the nation, founded upon the freest and fullest discussion of the subject.' 'If an Union should be effected with England,' said another distinguished lawyer, 'in pursuance of the consent of the majority of the thinking part of the nation fairly taken when the nation can think, I shall hold it to be my bounden duty to submit and to act under it. But if the separate right of legislation shall be annihilated, and transferred or incorporated with that of any other country without such consent of the nation, I cannot consider myself justly bound by the transaction.' 'Either this Union is against the consent of the people, or it is not,' said a third lawyer. 'If it is, the accomplishment of it is tyranny. If it is not, where is the harm or danger of having the constitutional sanction of the people?' The yeomen were significantly reminded that they had taken arms and had sworn to defend the Constitution of their country, and that this Constitution might have other enemies besides Father Murphy and the United Irishmen.

This short summary, condensed from the Anti-Union literature of 1798, will, I hope, show clearly the case of the opponents of the measure. The reader who will compare the rival arguments, will observe that there are several points in the pamphlet of Cooke which were untouched, and also that on both sides, but especially on that of the Anti-Unionists, there was a great reticence about the Catholic question. It was not due to indifference, for it is probable that no other part of the subject so largely affected the judgments of men, but rather to the fact that on each side, strenuous friends and enemies of the Catholic claims were united. It will be observed, too, that the opponents of the Union evaded one most formidable consideration. There was much force, or at least much plausibility, in the contention that a system which placed the government of Ireland directly in the hands of men of property, who were strongly and indisputably attached to the Empire, and whose influence with their people depended largely upon their political position, was conducive both to the well-being of Ireland, and to its attachment to the Empire. But if, in the constitutional changes that were mani-

festly impending, the disloyal element, which undoubtedly existed in the country, and which the events of the last few years had greatly intensified, invaded the Legislature, the problem would wholly change. No political madness could be greater than to put the legislative machinery of an integral and essential portion of the Empire into the hands of men who were largely or mainly disaffected to that Empire; and who, in times of difficulty, danger, and disaster, were likely to betray it. Nor did the opponents of the Union adequately recognise how enormously the revived religious and social antagonism produced by the late convulsions, had aggravated the difficulty of self-government in Ireland.

On the question of the constitutional capacity of the Legislature to carry an Union, a few words must be said. The doctrine that a Legislature can under no circumstances surrender its separate existence and transfer its legislative powers, though it may be supported by some authority and by some argument, may, I think, be lightly dismissed. Every nation must have some power of contracting an Union with another nation if it desires it, and in the theory and tradition of the British Constitution the Legislature is the supreme and perfect organ of the national will. The British Constitution in this respect differs essentially from the Constitution of the United States. In America the powers of Congress are defined and limited; a tribunal exists which can pronounce authoritatively upon the validity of its acts; and in accordance with the principles of Locke and of Rousseau, Conventions are formed to carry out constitutional changes by express authority of the people. But the enactment of the Scotch Union is a clear precedent, establishing the capacity of the Legislature of the British Empire, and its validity has not been seriously denied. If indeed the Scotch Union had been invalid, the whole legislation of the United Parliament would be vitiated, and the title of the monarch to his Scotch throne would be destroyed, for that title does not rest upon the Act of Settlement, which applied only to England, but solely upon a clause in the Act of Union. Blackstone and a long succession of great English lawyers have declared, in the most emphatic terms, that the power of the Legislature within the realm knows no limits except the laws of nature. Its acts

may be iniquitous, tyrannical, subversive of the most ancient liberties of the people; they may be the result of corruption, intimidation, or fraud, but no Act of Parliament can be invalid, for the simple reason that no tribunal exists which is competent to annul it.

From a lawyer's point of view, this position is unassailable. An Act is a valid law which every tribunal must acknowledge to be such, and which no existing authority has a legal right to resist. But though an Act of Parliament cannot be invalid, it may be unconstitutional, that is to say, opposed to the purposes for which the Constitution was constructed, to the main principles which were intended to govern its action.[1] Such Acts have occurred in English history, and they can only be justified by the plea of some overwhelming State necessity or expediency. The Act of the Parliament of 1716 in prolonging its own existence beyond the period for which it was elected belongs, I think, to this class,[2] and its best defence was that an election in 1717 would have endangered the whole settlement of the Revolution. The Irish Union appears to me to have been another and a graver example of the same kind. A Parliament which was elected when there was no question of an Union, transferred its own rights and the rights of its constituents to another Legislature, and the act was accomplished without any appeal to the electors by a dissolution.

The precedent of the Scotch Union has here also been adduced, but it is not altogether applicable. At the time of that Union

[1] 'It is indeed difficult, perhaps impossible, to give limits to the mere *abstract* competence of the supreme power, such as was exercised by Parliament at that time [the Revolution], but the limits of a *moral* competence subjecting, even in powers more indisputably sovereign, occasional will to permanent reason and to the steady maxims of faith, justice, and fixed fundamental policy, are perfectly intelligible and perfectly binding upon those who exercise any authority, under any name or under any title, in the State. The House of Lords, for instance, is not morally competent to dissolve the House of Commons, no, nor even to dissolve itself, nor to abdicate, if it would, its portion in the Legislature of the kingdom. Though a king may abdicate for his own person, he cannot abdicate for the monarchy. By as strong or by a stronger reason, the House of Commons cannot renounce its share of authority. The engagement and pact of society, which generally goes by the name of the Constitution, forbids such invasion and such surrender.' (Burke's 'Reflections on the French Revolution,' *Works*, v. 57.)

[2] I am aware that this doctrine is strongly and even contemptuously rejected, both by Hallam and Lord Stanhope, but the reader should compare with their remarks, those of Mr. Dicey, *On the Constitution*, pp. 37–44.

the objection was raised, that the members had no right to subvert the old Constitution of Scotland without the consent of their constituents. It was answered partly by the precedent of 1688, when the two Houses meeting in Convention transferred the crown, altered the succession, and settled the Revolution without consulting the constituencies, but partly also by the allegation that the last Scotch Parliament was summoned by a proclamation intimating that it was to treat of an Union, and that, 'being sent up for that declared purpose by their constituents, there remained no occasion to demand any other instructions from them.'[1] No such statement could be made in the case of the Irish Union. It may indeed be truly said that the dissolution of a Parliament consisting mainly of nomination boroughs could have had but little effect, but it would at least have elicited the opinion of the free constituencies, and without their sanction such a measure as the Union ought not, in my opinion, without the most urgent necessity, to have been pressed.

To complete the sketch of the Anti-Union literature of 1798, I must add that one of the most popular and most important of these writers was prepared to advocate great changes in the existing Constitution as an alternative to an Union. In the very

[1] Defoe's *History of the Union between England and Scotland*, pp. 230, 231. This question was naturally much discussed in the Irish Debates. A member named Crookshank put the point with much clearness: 'I deny that the Parliament of an independent State, for which the members of that Parliament are trustees, has any right whatever, without the permission of its constituents expressly or impliedly given for the purpose, to surrender to another country the whole, or any part, of its legislative authority. . . . This power can never, upon principle or precedent, be contended to belong to the representatives of the people, but by express or implied delegation. And so strongly were the British Ministers, in the reign of Anne, impressed with this great constitutional principle, that in preparing for the Union of England and Scotland, they felt it necessary to declare, in the proclamation for convening the Scotch Parliament, that they were called together for the purpose of arranging and settling the treaty of Union then in contemplation, reasonably concluding that the election of representatives, after such an avowal of the intended project, must be considered as permission to discuss and finally decide upon that question.' (*Report of the Debates on the Union*, 1799, pp. 20, 21.) The rival doctrine was well stated by William Smith in the same debate. 'Parliament is as competent to conclude an Union as it is to enact a turnpike Bill. . . . Public sentiment on a great and complicated measure is weighty evidence of the mischief or utility of that measure; as such it should be laid before, and may, perhaps, conclusively sway the judgment of that body, which has the right of legislation. But public opinion is but evidence, not law. It is evidence which the people may lay before that Parliament, . . . whose right of finally and exclusively deciding the question, uncontrolled by popular whim, is a clear and undoubted principle of the Constitution.' (P. 87.)

remarkable pamphlet of Jebb, while the arguments against an incorporating Union are stated with much force, a series of concessions was proposed which would have gone far to transform the relation between the two countries. It was said that, 'in order to set at rest every Imperial question that can suggest itself as likely to occur to the most jealous and the most speculative politician,' it might be enacted that when the King had declared war, and the British Parliament had sanctioned it, the Irish Parliament should be bound to follow. It was suggested also, that all questions of trade between the two countries should be settled on the basis of reciprocity by a final and irrevocable treaty; that the religious establishment should be guaranteed by a provision forbidding its alteration without the concurrence of the two Parliaments, and finally that, 'to accomplish what is perhaps the Ministers' grand object in the Union,' the debts of England and Ireland should be consolidated, and an arrangement made by which Ireland should pay some proportion to the general debt charge of the Empire. By such measures, Jebb maintained, every real object expected from the Union could be attained.[1]

The opposition which was led by the Irish bar was strenuously supported. A large and thoroughly representative meeting of the bankers and merchants of all religious opinions was held in Dublin on December 18, and resolutions were unanimously passed acknowledging the great increase of Irish commerce and prosperity since 1782, expressing the strongest sentiments of loyalty to the King and the connection, but at the same time condemning in emphatic terms, as highly dangerous and impolitic, any attempt to deprive the Irish people of their Parliament. The resolutions were introduced by William Digges Latouche, the first banker, and one of the most respected men, in Ireland; and they were seconded by John Claudius Beresford, who had hitherto been a strenuous supporter of the Government, who was a warm partisan of the Protestant ascendency, and who had lately shown great zeal, and also great violence, in putting down rebellion in Dublin. If opinions were to be weighed as well as

[1] Jebb's *Reply to a Pamphlet entitled, Arguments for and against an Union*, pp. 19, 20. The author of this pamphlet was afterwards a judge. His arguments attracted much attention and some favour among the Ministers. See Ball's *Irish Legislative Systems*, pp. 245, 246.

counted, the significance of this meeting could hardly be overrated. 'When I warn you,' wrote Beresford to Lord Castlereagh, 'of the universal disgust, nay, horror, that Dublin, and even all the lower part of the North, have at the idea of the Union, I do not do it with any idea that my opinion would have weight in turning Government from their design, but from a wish that they should know what they have to contend with; for I confess to you, that I fear more the effect the measure will have on the minds of the people (particularly those that were the best affected) than I do the measure itself. . . . The conversations on this subject have given the almost annihilated body of United Irishmen new spirits, and the society is again rising like a phœnix from its ashes.'[1] The Corporation of Dublin, and a meeting of the county, denounced the measure in even stronger terms. Foster, whose opinion was perhaps as valuable as that of anyone in Ireland, solemnly warned the Government, that the public mind was against them, and that under such circumstances it would be dangerous, if not disastrous, to persist.[2] 'The inflammation in Dublin,' wrote Lord Castlereagh in the beginning of 1799, 'is extreme,' but he added that it was 'as yet confined to the middling and higher classes.'[3]

There were, however, other classes and other parts of Ireland in which opinion at this time was much more doubtful and divided. Among the opponents of Catholic emancipation, there was a profound difference. Foster and Clare, who were by far the ablest men in that party, took opposite sides. John Beresford, who had borne so great a part in the recall of Lord Fitzwilliam, appears from his letters to have been completely panic-stricken by the danger to which property and the Establishment had recently been exposed; and he was as favourable to an Union as his son, John Claudius Beresford, was opposed to it. Duigenan, as was usual with him, followed Clare. Saurin was

[1] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, ii. 47, 48, 51.

[2] Ibid. i. 449. Lord Auckland appears to have formed much the same estimate as Foster of the opinion of the country. On Dec. 22, 1798, he wrote to Beresford, 'Your countrymen seem to be completely absurd on the subject of the Union. I shall not, however, be sorry that the rejection of it should be their own act and deed. A day may come when they will wish for it without being able to obtain it.' (*Beresford Correspondence*, ii. 191.)

[3] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, ii. 81. There are many other notices of the Dublin Opposition in the *Castlereagh* and *Cornwallis Correspondence*.

one of the most extreme opponents. Alderman James, a former Lord Mayor of Dublin, who had great influence among the Dublin Orangemen, was eager for the Union, under the belief that the Prince of Wales and the Opposition were pledged to the Catholics; and that 'an Union was the only means of preserving the Protestant State against the Irish papists and their English supporters.'[1] The Government hoped that such representations would make many converts among the Orangemen, but it soon appeared that their dominant sentiment was decidedly adverse to the Union, and it was considered a great triumph when some of its leading supporters succeeded in inducing the chief Orange lodges, both in Dublin and the North, to come to an agreement that they would not as a society take any part in the discussion, but would leave each Orangeman in his individual capacity free to adopt what line he pleased. 'This,' Duigenan said, 'is the utmost service the friends of the Union have been able to effect.'[2] Complaints were made to the Grand Lodge, that some of the younger members of the body, in their hostility to the Union, were even making overtures to the United Irishmen,[3] and some yeomen declared that they would not retain their arms or continue their services if the measure was persisted in.[4]

The attitude of Ulster, and especially of that great Presbyterian population of Ulster which was so deeply imbued with republicanism, was on the whole more encouraging. A few years before, the fiercest opposition would have probably come from this quarter. But Ulster and Ulster politics had in the last months strangely altered. 'The measure,' wrote Castlereagh at the end of November, 'as yet has made no sensation in the North. Some time since, the Presbyterians would have been found most energetic opponents, but they have been long disinclined to the existing system; of late they are rather tired of the treason in which they had very deeply embarked; perhaps they may be inclined to compromise with the Union;' and he expressed, as

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, ii. 443; *Castlereagh Correspondence*, ii. 17.

[2] See the resolution of the Grand Lodge, Jan. 5, 1799; Cupples' *Principles of the Orange Association Vindicated* (1799); also *Castlereagh Correspondence*, ii. 52, 53, 80.

[3] See Cupples' *Principles of the Orange Association*.

[4] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, ii. 35, 80, 81; *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 29. Dobbs, in his remarkable speech against the Union, in 1799, noticed the strong and notorious hostility of the loyal yeomanry of Ireland to the measure. (*Debate*, Jan. 22, 23, 1799 p. 38.)

we have seen, a hope that an augmentation of the Regium Donum would secure their ministers.[1] Three weeks later, Castlereagh's father wrote from Mount Stewart, that he had heard no one 'argue with any keenness either for or against' the Union, but that there were reports that two popular politicians were in favour of it. 'I infer,' he continued, 'the popular current will not be very strong in this corner of the North against the measure. I conclude most of those who were actuated with a strong reforming spirit, entertain such a dislike and antipathy to the present subsisting Parliament of the country, that they will not be very adverse to any change that will rid them of what they deem so very corrupt a Legislature.' There was a hope among some Belfast merchants, that an Union would greatly develop Belfast trade. 'The lower order of manufacturers and farmers,' Lord Londonderry said, 'unless set going by the upper ranks, will concern themselves little about the matter.'[2]

Cornwallis was very dubious on the subject. On December 15, he writes, 'Our reports of the reception of the measure in the North are not favourable, especially about Belfast;' but only a fortnight later he reported that, although there were some signs of renewed disaffection in the North, he did not believe them to be connected with the Union, and that on that question, 'the appearances in the North are by no means discouraging. Belfast has shown no disinclination, at which some of the violent party in Dublin are not less surprised than indignant. In Derry the most respectable merchants are decidedly for the measure, and I have understood from several persons lately returned from the North, whose information deserves credit, that the linen trade, looking to secure for ever the protection they now enjoy in the British market, are friendly to the principle. Newry is quiet on the question, and disposed to consider it fairly.'[3] 'The general disposition of the North,' Lord Castlereagh wrote a little later, 'is favourable to the measure, particularly the linen trade.'[4] Lord Charlemont, who hated the Union, acknowledged that Ulster on this question showed none of the fire which it had displayed in the days of the volunteers, and more recently when

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, ii. 444.

[2] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, ii. 39, 40.

[3] Ibid. ii. 78–80; *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 18.

[4] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, ii. 127.

the yeomanry were enrolled. 'The silence of the country,' he wrote to an intimate friend, 'is the only argument Administration can bring forward against us, a silence principally occasioned by the torpor which their own measures, perhaps cunningly, have produced.' He tried to organise a movement against the Union at Armagh, and found 'the freeholders indeed willing, but many of the gentlemen supine, and the sheriff is absent.'[1] Bishop Percy, who supported the projected Union with much warmth, believed at this time that there was much real opinion in its favour. Dublin, he admitted, was fiercely and dangerously opposed to it, and the Irish bar was exerting all its energies against it, but he believed also that in Cork, Waterford, and even Belfast, mercantile opinion was favourable to the measure; that the very expectation of it had already given a great spur to the linen manufacture; and that in the South many landed gentry, who had hitherto been strenuous advocates of the legislative independence of Ireland, were so terrified by the scenes of carnage in Wexford, and by the dangers to which their lives and properties were exposed, that they would gladly and even eagerly accept protection under the shelter of an Union. Such a measure, in the opinion of Bishop Percy, would be of the greatest advantage to Ireland; 'but after all,' he wrote, 'I fear we are not sufficiently enlightened to resist the narrow, bigoted outcries of the ignorant and the interested, and the lawyers are overwhelming the world with publications, and the Dublin mob are rending the skies with shouts against it, which probably may prevent its passing, or even being mentioned at all in Parliament.'[2]

The Protestants formed but a small minority of the population of Ireland, but they included the great preponderance of its energy, intelligence, and property. They were the political and governing class, the class who chiefly created that strong, intelligent, independent, and uninfluenced public opinion, which in every country it is the duty of a wise statesman especially to consult. It seems plain that the bulk of Protestant opinion on the question oscillated, at this time, between violent opposition and a languid or at best a favourable acquiescence, and that there was very little real, earnest or

[1] Charlemont to Halliday, Feb. 2, 1799. (*Charlemont MSS.*)

[2] Bishop Percy to his wife, Jan. 13, 21, 1799. (British Museum.)

spontaneous desire for the measure. Two facts, which appear prominently in the correspondence of this period, attest most eloquently the disposition of the people. The one was the acknowledged necessity of keeping an immense English force in Ireland, for the purpose of guarding, not merely against a foreign enemy, but also against the dangers to be apprehended in carrying the Union.[1] The other was the confession of Lord Castlereagh, that 'nothing but an established conviction that the English Government will never lose sight of the Union till it is carried, could give the measure a chance of success.'[2]

On the Catholic side, however, it obtained a real though a fluctuating, uncertain, and somewhat conditional support, and there can be little doubt that if Catholic emancipation had formed a part of the scheme, the support would have been very considerable. Pitt at first desired to take this course;[3] but Clare, as we have seen, convinced him that it was impracticable, and Pitt then strongly inclined to an Union on a Protestant basis.[4] Lord Grenville agreed with him, though before the rebellion he said he would have thought differently.[5] Cornwallis, as we have seen, doubted and fluctuated, while Dundas was prepared to

[1] See an earnest letter of Lord Castlereagh when there was some question of the English militia returning home. 'The Lord Lieutenant's opinion decidedly is, that without the force in question, it would expose the King's interest in this kingdom, to hazard a measure which, however valuable in its future effects, cannot fail in the discussion very seriously to agitate the public mind.' (*Castlereagh Correspondence*, ii. 13.) Several letters from Cornwallis on the extreme danger of withdrawing the English militia, will be found in the second volume of the *Cornwallis Correspondence*. In one of them he says, 'All thoughts of uniting the two kingdoms must be given up, if that force should now be withdrawn.' (P. 454.)

[2] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, ii. 81.

[3] Ibid. i. 404. In the *Pelham MSS.* there is a curious, but unfortunately undated, 'plan of an Union,' which evidently was drawn up at an early stage of the consideration of the subject. It is divided into seven articles, and it is accompanied by a paper with comments on each article, endorsed 'Notes by Mr. Pitt.' The passage relating to the Catholics in the original plan is, 'Catholics to be eligible to all offices, civil and military, taking the present oath. Such as shall take the oath of supremacy in the Bill of Rights, may sit in Parliament without subscribing the Abjuration. Corporation offices to be Protestant.' Pitt's comment upon this is, 'The first part seems unexceptionable, and is exactly what I wish (supposing the present oath, as settled by the Irish Act, 33 George III. c. 21, to be satisfactory to the better part of the Catholics, which should be ascertained), but if this oath is sufficient for office, why require a different one for Parliament? and why are Corporation offices to be exclusively Protestant, when those of the State may be Catholic?'

[4] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, i 412.

[5] Buckingham's *Courts and Cabinets*, ii. 411.

favour the wider scheme if Cornwallis considered it feasible.[1] Among those who most regretted the change was William Elliot, who was one of the ablest and most esteemed of the English officials in Ireland. He had been thought of as Chief Secretary when Lord Camden was appointed, and some years after the Union he returned to Ireland in that position, but he was now Under Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant for the Military Department, and was employed very confidentially in the communications between the English and Irish Governments which preceded the Union. He was so fully convinced that the Government were making a profound mistake in dissociating the two measures, that when the decision was finally taken, he desired to resign his office and his seat in the Irish Parliament. 'Since the measure is embarked in,' he wrote to Castlereagh, 'I feel anxious for its success. Even on its present narrow and contracted basis, I believe it will be productive of advantage to the Empire. If the Catholics are wise, they will acquiesce in it; but I am afraid we have left them ground of complaint. I cannot be easily persuaded that if more firmness had been displayed here at first, an Union might not have been accomplished including the admission of the Catholic claims; but Mr. Pitt has with a lamentable facility yielded this point to prejudice, without, I suspect, acquiring support in any degree equivalent to the sacrifice.'[2]

The Catholic leaders, however, themselves do not appear to have agreed with Elliot. From the very first disclosure of the scheme, it became evident that they looked on it with favour, and Lord Fingall, Lord Kenmare, and Archbishop Troy at this time entirely approved of the omission of the Catholic question from the measure. They considered that it would be 'injurious to the Catholic claims to have them discussed in the present temper of the Irish Parliament;' that to do so 'would hazard the success of the Union without serving the Catholics;' that it would be 'much more for their interest that the question should rest till it could be submitted in quieter times to the unprejudiced decision of the United Parliament, relying on their receiving

[1] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, i. 431.

[2] Ibid. ii. 29, 30. This was written from England. The resignation was not accepted. Lord Minto, in his very elaborate speech in favour of the Union (which was published separately), strongly urged that Catholic emancipation should, if possible, be made an article in the Act.

hereafter every indulgence which could be extended to them without endangering the Protestant Establishment.' Lord Kenmare and Lord Fingall were especially anxious to see a State endowment of the priests, which would make them less dependent on the most ignorant and turbulent classes, and Archbishop Troy promised that he would use all his influence in favour of the Union on the sole condition that it contained no clause barring future concessions. 'Upon the whole,' Lord Castlereagh wrote in the beginning of December, 'it appears to me, as far as the dispositions of the Catholics have yet disclosed themselves, that there is every reason to expect from them a preference for the measure. An active support from that body would not perhaps be advantageous to the success of the Union. It would particularly increase the jealousy of the Protestants, and render them less inclined to the question.'[1]

The opinion of the Catholics outside the small circle of their leading prelates and gentry was less decided, but at first the Government considered it clearly favourable. At the discussion at the meeting of the bar, a Protestant gentleman named Grady, when advocating the Union, declared that the Catholics, who formed the bulk of the people of Ireland, desired it. He was met by loud cries of dissent, and he explained that he spoke from an intimate knowledge of the South of Ireland; that the great Catholic trading interest there was entirely in its favour, and that the most respectable Catholics of his acquaintance considered the Union to be not only of great general advantage to the State, but also the only way of allaying the religious hatred and intolerance which the last few months had revived. In the course of the debate, a prominent Catholic lawyer named Bellew denied these assertions, but he contented himself with stating that the Catholics had as yet formed no decided opinion on the question, and had not begun seriously to consider it.[2] In the Government letters, however, of November and the beginning of December, the province of Munster, and especially the towns of Limerick and Cork, are continually spoken of as decidedly favourable to the Union.[3] The first resolutions in its favour came from the

[1] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, ii. 35, 36.

[2] *Report of the Debate of the Irish Bar, Dec.* 9, 1798, pp. 27, 28, 50, 51.

[3] See *Castlereagh Correspondence*, ii. 17, 19, 26, 79, 84, 85; *Cornwallis Correspondence*, ii. 443; iii. 8.

Corporation of Cork; they were passed unanimously, and Lord Castlereagh states that a great number of principal inhabitants expressed their approbation of them, and that Colonel Fitzgerald, one of the members for the county, who was 'inferior to no man in personal respectability,' as well as Lord Shannon, the great nobleman of the county, were strongly in favour of the Union.[1] Lord Shannon, Lord Longueville, and Lord Donoughmore, who were strong partisans of the Union, had great influence in Cork and its neighbourhood, but they only, Lord Cornwallis said, 'gave full effect to the natural sentiments of the place, which are warmly in favour of the Union.' A petition, it is true, signed by 1,800 inhabitants of Cork was afterwards presented against the Union, but it was strenuously asserted that it did not represent the opinion of the majority of the traders or freemen of that great Catholic town.[2] It was believed that Cork would gain as much by it as Dublin would lose, and that her magnificent harbour would become one of the chief centres of the commerce of the Empire.[3] One of the first Irish pamphlets in favour of the Union was written by Theobald McKenna, who had been for many years the principal pamphleteer of the Catholic body. It contained, however, one passage which was somewhat ominous. 'Unless the servants of the Crown mean, among other internal regulations, to include a settlement under the head of religious difference completely coextensive with the grievance, then will an incorporation of the Legislatures be found a measure bad for Ireland, but, if possible, worse for Britain.'[4]

Before the meeting of Parliament, the Ministers had become much less hopeful about the disposition of the Catholics. Early in December, Cornwallis wrote to General Ross, 'The opposition to the Union increases daily in and about Dublin, and I am afraid, from conversations which I have had with persons much connected with them, that I was too sanguine when I hoped for the good inclinations of the Catholics. Their disposition is so com-

[1] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, ii. 84, 85.

[2] Coote's *History of the Union*, p. 447; *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 124, 125.

[3] See Cottingham's *Observations on the projected Union*, pp. 31, 32; Barnes' *Rights of the Imperial Crown of Ireland*, pp. 85, 86.

[4] McKenna's *Memoir on Questions respecting the projected Union*, p. 23. McKenna said, 'If the people of Scotland had been emancipated by abolishing the hereditable jurisdictions, the rebellions of 1715 and 1745 would, as to that country, have been most probably prevented.' (P. 16.)

pletely alienated from the British Government, that I believe they would even be tempted to join with their bitterest enemies, the Protestants of Ireland, if they thought that measure would lead to a total separation of the two countries.'[1] 'The principal Catholics about Dublin,' he wrote a few days later, 'begin to hold a much less sanguine language about the probable conduct of their brethren, and are disposed to think that, in this part of the kingdom at least, the greater number of them will join in opposition to the Union.'[2]

Cooke still thought the great body friendly and well inclined, but he observed that they held aloof, and that their leaders hesitated. It was now argued that the Union could be no real union without emancipation; 'that the Catholics, being the excluded caste, will ever be discontented; that they will be called the Irish; that they will still have a distinct interest.'[3] There were two important meetings of Catholic leaders at Lord Fingall's, and, to the great disappointment of the Government, no resolution was arrived at.[4] Lord Kenmare was not present at the first meeting, but wrote strongly in favour of the Union; Lord Fingall seemed for a time somewhat doubtful; Bellew was with difficulty prevented from moving a hostile resolution. He said to Lord Cornwallis, that the Catholics could not be expected to favour a measure from which they not only would derive no advantage, but would find themselves in a worse situation than at present. If they were excluded from Parliament at the Union, he saw no prospect of their afterwards entering it, for when incorporated into the mass of British subjects they would be a small minority, and the British Test Act would be a strong barrier to their claims. Cornwallis acknowledged that in his own opinion this argument had much force.[5]

'The Catholics as a body,' wrote Cornwallis in the beginning of January, 'still adhere to their reserve on the measure of

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 16.

[2] Ibid. pp. 18, 19.

[3] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, ii. 43, 46, 47; *Auckland Correspondence*, iv. 76, 77.

[4] Archbishop Troy wrote to Castlereagh: 'The general opinion of the meeting was, that the Catholics as such ought not to deliberate on the Union as a question of empire, but only as it might affect their own peculiar interests as a body; and on this it was judged inexpedient to publish any resolution or declaration at present.' (*Castlereagh Correspondence*, ii. 61.)

[5] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 22.

Union. The very temperate and liberal sentiments at first entertained and expressed by some of that body, were by no means adopted by the Catholics who met at Lord Fingall's and professed to speak for the party at large. Whether it was their original sentiment to oppose the Union unless their objects were comprehended in it, or whether this disposition was taken up when they observed Government to be either weakly supported or opposed by the Protestants, it is difficult to determine. Certain it is, they now hold off. . . . What line of conduct they will ultimately adopt when decidedly convinced that the measure will be persevered in on Protestant principles, I am incapable of judging. I shall endeavour to give them the most favourable impressions without holding out to them hopes of any relaxation on the part of Government, and shall leave no effort untried to prevent an opposition to the Union being made the measure of that party; as I should much fear, should it be made a Catholic principle to resist the Union, that the favourable sentiments entertained by individuals would give way to the party feeling, and deprive us of our principal strength in the South and West, which could not fail, at least for the present, to prove fatal to the measure.'[1]

These passages give a full and very authentic picture of the state of public opinion on the subject of the Union, at the critical period before the meeting of Parliament in 1799. Several of the most sagacious judges in Ireland warned the Government, that the reception which the scheme had met with was such, that it would be in the highest degree unwise to persist in it. Many of those who held this language, were men who considered the Union in the abstract exceedingly desirable, and who had no doubt that by borough influence and Government pressure it could be carried, but they contended that if it were carried contrary to the genuine and uninfluenced opinion of the country, and if such opinions as supported it were chiefly due to transient panic, to resentment, or to despair, it would not ultimately prove a success. Lord Pery and Lord Carleton were fully confirmed in their first misgivings, and now strongly condemned the project.[2] Lord Kilwarden, who was one of the best and ablest men in Ireland, and who had at first been very favourable,

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 28, 29. [2] Ibid. p. 4.

was so much impressed by the aspect of opinion, that he entreated the Ministers, as soon as Parliament met, frankly to withdraw the measure.[1] Parnell, after much confidential conversation with Cooke, declared that he must oppose it, for it was, in his judgment, 'very dangerous and not necessary,' and 'a measure of the greatest danger can only be justified by necessity.'[2]

Lord Ely, the great borough owner, who had been ready in November, for a personal object, to support the Union, wrote from London to Castlereagh in January: 'We have bad accounts here of the state of the malcontents in Ireland. God grant that this mad scheme may not go too far for all the projectors of it to appease. I have not conversed with a single person since I came here who has advanced a single argument in favour of it, and all the Irishmen I converse with, are pointedly and decidedly against the measure. I can scarcely give credit to their bringing it on now. . . . Its great and only advocates are men who do not belong to us, and absentees who never again intend to visit Ireland.'[3] Lord Sheffield had been a strong partisan of the Union, but he now hoped that it would not be pressed if it were true, as he heard from Ireland, that the country was 'universally ill prepared for it,' and that it could be carried only by a small majority. He quoted the saying of an Irish judge, that an Union so carried would always leave behind it 'a very angry party anxious to dissolve it, and that can only be done by sword and separation.'[4] McNally, who watched the changing aspects of events with a keener eye than many greater men, and who had at least the merit of never flattering the Government which employed him, was equally discouraging. 'The Orange and Green,' he wrote, 'are making rapid approaches towards each other. The respectable Catholics, however, are determined not to come forward on the question of Union in a body, though individually they are to a man against it. I speak of those in the city. . . . In my judgment, there will not be the slightest appearance of mob or riot. Every man is aware of the great military force in the capital, and of its daily increasing. I rather expect melancholy silence and

[1] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, ii. 62.
[2] *Auckland Correspondence*, iv. 77.
[3] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 37.
[4] Lord Sheffield to Judge Downes, Jan. 20, 1799. (*Pelham MSS.*)

depopulated streets while the Parliament is sitting. Lord Camden's character loses much with the Orange party. They say the Union was his object, that the rebellion was permitted to increase, and they are sacrificed dupes to their loyalty. Men in general speak loudly and boldly, and only want the power to act. I know Cork as well as I do Dublin. The acts of their Corporation have very little influence out of their own hall.'[1]

One other remarkable letter may be cited. Sir George Shee was, as we have seen, among the most active and most loyal of the Irish magistrates, and he was one of the few members of his class who were strongly in favour of the Union. He was intimate with Pelham, and on the first day of 1799 he wrote to him, that he was never more certain of any truth in his life, than that an Union would be advantageous to Ireland and highly so to the Empire at large, but he could not shut his eyes to the fact that the opposition to it was becoming more formidable every day, and he could not subscribe to the doctrine that the measure must be carried at all hazards. 'I anxiously hope,' he continued, 'Government may not depend on the battle being fought and won in Parliament only. . . . If it should prove that we have lost one great party without gaining another, we shall be truly unfortunate. . . . If it should unfortunately appear that the enemy has gained possession of all the vantage ground in the cities and counties in general, I fear a vote of the House of Commons, passed by a small majority (which, I hear, is all that can be expected), will not be considered as expressing the sense of the people, and that, instead of proving the symbol of concord, it may prove to be the signal for battle. At all events, I trust no intention will be formed of supporting this vote by military force, and yet if it should pass I do not see how Government could retreat, let the opposition be what it may. . . . If the measure cannot be carried in the majority of the counties and towns, and all parties in general continue to decline expressing approbation of it, I really think that a moment should not be lost in relinquishing it for the present, and by that means quieting the ferment it has caused.'[2]

These words appear to me to bear the stamp of true states-

[1] J. W., Jan. 2, 1799. (I.S P.O.)
[2] Sir G. Shee to Pelham, Jan. 1, 1799. (*Pelham MSS.*)

manship; but the Government had firmly resolved to flinch from no obstacle. For carrying the measure through Parliament, they relied mainly on the borough interest. Lord Cornwallis said, indeed, that many of the borough owners were in their hearts strongly disinclined to it, but he had as little doubt about the course they would pursue. 'If those who possess the borough interest believe that the British Government are determined to persevere in the measure of the Union, and that they will be able to carry it, they will afford them the most hearty support; but if they should entertain doubts on either of these points, they will contend for the merit of having been the first to desert.'[1] Lord Shannon, the largest of the borough owners, was in favour of the Union. In the opinion of Cooke, if Lord Ely and Lord Downshire could be secured, the sixteen or eighteen votes which they could command in the House of Commons would turn the balance.[2]

The Duke of Portland now authorised the Lord Lieutenant formally to assure all persons who had political influence, that the King's Government was determined to press on the Union, 'as essential to the well-being of both countries, and particularly to the security and peace of Ireland as dependent on its connection with Great Britain;' that they would support it with their utmost power; that even in the event of present failure, it would be 'renewed on every occasion until it succeeds, and that the conduct of individuals upon this subject will be considered as the test of their disposition to support the King's Government.'[3] Sir John Parnell, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, was dismissed, and replaced by Isaac Corry, a staunch Unionist. The dismissal of the Prime Sergeant, James Fitzgerald, immediately followed, and he was replaced by St. George Daly, one of the minority who had supported the Union at the bar debate. George Knox, one of the Commissioners of Revenue, resigned his office. John Claudius Beresford soon after took the same course.

In the House of Lords the Government was secure, and in the House of Commons the number of men whom it was necessary to gain in order to obtain a majority was not large. The House consisted, it is true, of 300 members, but the well-understood

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 22, 23, 36.

[2] *Auckland Correspondence*, iv. 77.

[3] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 20.

rule, that the member of a nomination borough, if he had received his seat by favour and not purchase, must vote with his patron, and the immense number of boroughs that were concentrated in a very few hands, greatly simplified the task. A shameless traffic in votes began, and many men of great name and position in the world, were bought as literally as cattle in the cattle market. There were, however, a few honest men like Conolly, who had always desired an Union; a few like Yelverton, who probably believed that the recent convulsions in Ireland and the state of Europe had made it a necessity; a few, like Sir George Shee, who would gladly have seen the question adjourned, but who, when it was raised, considered it in the public interest to support it. 'The demands of our friends,' wrote Cornwallis on the eve of the meeting of Parliament, 'rise in proportion to the appearance of strength on the other side; and you, who know how I detest a job, will be sensible of the difficulties which I must often have to keep my temper; but still the object is great, and perhaps the salvation of the British Empire may depend upon it. I shall, therefore, as much as possible overcome my detestation of the work in which I am engaged, and march on steadily to my point. The South of Ireland are well disposed to Union, the North seem in a state of neutrality, or rather apathy, on the subject, which is to me incomprehensible; but all the counties in the middle of the island, from Dublin to Galway, are violent against it. The Catholics on the whole behave better than I expected, and I do not think that popular tumult is anywhere to be apprehended except in the metropolis.'[1]

In addition to attempts that were made to influence opinion through the Press, and to some attempts to obtain addresses both in the Catholic parts of the island and in the North,[2] the Government trusted much for the ultimate popularity of the measure, to the support of the Catholic bishops. A negotiation was officially opened with them. They were told that, in the present division of opinion, the political claims of the Catholics must remain for

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 39, 40.

[2] 'I have taken the necessary steps for encouraging declarations from the towns of Limerick, Waterford, Derry, and Newry, as far as they can be obtained without too strong an appearance of Government interference, and am employed in counteracting, as far as possible, the county meetings, which are extending themselves.' *Castlereagh Correspondence*, ii. 92 (Jan. 11, 1799).

the consideration of the Imperial Parliament, but that the Government were strongly desirous of proposing without delay an independent provision for the Roman Catholic clergy, under such regulations and safeguards as the prelates would accept as compatible with their doctrines, discipline, and just influence. The expediency of such a step, Lord Castlereagh added, was generally recognised, even by those who objected to concessions of a political nature.

A large number of Catholic bishops were at this time in Dublin, about the affairs of the College of Maynooth, and on the 17th, 18th, and 19th of January, 1799, they deliberated at the invitation of the Government on this proposal, and arrived unanimously at some very important resolutions. They agreed 'that a provision through Government for the Roman Catholic clergy of the kingdom, competent and secured, ought to be thankfully accepted,' and that such an interference of Government in the appointment of Catholic prelates 'as may enable it to be satisfied of the loyalty of the person appointed, is just, and ought to be agreed to.' They proceeded to explain how they desired this power of veto to be exercised. They desired that, on episcopal vacancies, the names of candidates to be transmitted to Rome, should be selected as at present by the priests and bishops, but that 'the candidates so selected should be presented by the president of the election to Government; which, within one month after such presentation, will transmit the name of the said candidate, if no objection be made against him, for appointment to the Holy See, or return the said name to the president of the election for such transmission as may be agreed on.' If Government have any proper objection against such candidates, the president of the election will be informed thereof within one month after presentation, who in that case will convene the electors to the election of another candidate.' These regulations, the prelates explained, required the sanction of the Holy See, but they promised to endeavour to procure that sanction as speedily as possible. They agreed also 'that the nomination of parish priests, with a certificate of their having taken the oath of allegiance, be certified to Government.'[1]

[1] The resolutions will be found in Butler's *Memoirs of the English, Irish, and Scotch Catholics*, ii. 150–152. A manuscript copy was transmitted by

These resolutions were signed by the four archbishops and the six senior bishops of Ireland. They were accepted as the unanimous opinion of the Irish Roman Catholic prelacy,[1] and they were brought to Lord Castlereagh by Archbishop Troy and Bishop Moylan.[2] They form a curious and instructive contrast to the attitude of the Catholic bishops and laity, some years later, when the question of the veto was revived, but they in truth proposed to give the Government no power which had not been long exercised by the civil authority in other non-Catholic countries. In the schismatical empire of Russia, and in the Protestant kingdom of Prussia, every Catholic prelate held his see, not only with the direct sanction, but on the express nomination of the sovereign; and even in the British Empire, no Catholic bishop could be appointed in Canada, without the approval of the civil governor.[3] The provision for the Catholic clergy was intended to be analogous to the Regium Donum to the Presbyterian ministers, and some such assistance was at this time actually enjoyed by the Catholic priesthood in Scotland. Having very recently been reduced to great destitution by the confiscation of their property in France, the Scotch Catholic prelates had petitioned the English Government for assistance, and Pitt had conceded the request, and a formal letter had arrived from Rome, under the signature of Cardinal Borgia, thanking the English Government by the express command of Pius VI. for its munificence.[4]

In England about the same time, Dr. Douglas, the bishop who presided over the London Catholics, and also some other prelates, expressed their strong desire to obtain a Government provision for the English priests, and such provision seems to have been seriously contemplated, and is even said to have been at one time promised. At this period, indeed, the Catholic

Bishop Moylan to Pelham, and is among his papers. Butler quotes (p. 149) the speech in which Lord Castlereagh in 1810 described this negotiation, and gives other valuable papers relating to it.

[1] See Butler, ii. 182, 183.

[2] See a letter of Dr. Moylan (Bishop of Cork) to Pelham, March 9, 1799. (*Pelham MSS.*)

[3] Butler, ii. 161, 186, 187.

[4] Ibid. ii. 156. See, too, the very warm letter of the Scotch bishops, expressing their thanks to their 'generous benefactors, his Majesty's Ministers,' and explaining the employment of the sum which had been allowed them. (*Castlereagh Correspondence*, ii. 332, 333.)

bishops in the three kingdoms appear to have been unanimously in favour of a State endowment.[1]

The immense advantage of the proposed arrangement in raising the character, status, independence, and loyalty of the Irish priests, and in saving their congregations from various burdensome and irritating dues, could hardly be exaggerated, and it was intended to complete the policy by some regulations, imitated from those in the Gallican Church, about the circulation of papal rescripts in Ireland, and for securing a somewhat better class of schoolmasters.[2] The scheme, however, was also intended as part of the plan of Union, as a means of securing the favour and influence of a class who had great power over their co-religionists.[3]

We have a curious illustration of the manner in which these negotiations were conducted, in the fact that the Irish Government appear to have acted in this important matter entirely on their own responsibility, supported, indeed, by the expressed opinion of Pitt and Dundas in favour of the endowment of the priesthood, but without the sanction or knowledge of the Cabinet, or even of the Secretary of State who was especially connected with Irish affairs. Shortly after the resolutions had passed, Bishop Moylan wrote a letter to Pelham, enclosing a copy of them, and asking his opinion about them, and Pelham forwarded it with a similar request to Portland. In his reply Portland said, 'Until I received yours, I did not know that any conversation had passed upon the subject between them [the Irish bishops] and Lord Castlereagh, I mean in so official a form as to have produced such a deliberation as you have sent me the result of, and consequently, without any knowledge of the sentiments of the Government and bishops of Ireland; and of course, as you see, in the same state of ignorance with regard to those of my colleagues in administration and the great lights in the English Church, it would not only be imprudent, but is really impossible for me to state anything upon this question, that ought to be considered as an opinion, or is really more than an

[1] See some remarkable letters of Sir J. Hippisley, *Castlereagh Correspondence*, iii. 80, 81, 86, 87.

[2] Butler, ii. 168–170. A great deal of information about the rules prevailing on these matters throughout Europe, will be found in Sir J. Hippisley's tracts, and in his letters in the third volume of the *Castlereagh Correspondence*.

[3] Butler, ii. 168, 179.

outline of my own ideas, which, I must desire you to consider, are by no means settled.' Subject to these wide qualifications, Portland gave his opinion, that the Gallican Church was the best model to follow, but that the Catholics could only be put, like the Protestant Dissenters, on the footing of a toleration, and that it was exceedingly expedient that, when they were endowed, measures should be taken to bring their clergy under the same common law as the Anglican clergy, and their judgments and sentences against lay Catholics, like those of the Anglican ecclesiastical courts, under the superintendence and control of the courts of law. Excommunications, Portland said, were employed in Ireland in a manner and for purposes that would never be tolerated in any well-ordered Catholic country.[1]

With this exception, no fixed proposal appears to have been as yet made to the Catholics, though much informal negotiation was going on. 'The Catholics,' Cooke wrote a few days before the meeting of Parliament, 'keep aloof, but apparently friendly. My politics are to admit them after an Union. If Mr. Pitt would undertake that, and we could reconcile it with friends here, we might be sure of the point. The Catholics will carry the day. Lord Shannon would admit them; the Chancellor sturdy against them.'[2] Wilberforce at this time was much with Pitt, and he wrote in his diary: 'Pitt sanguine that after Union, Roman Catholics would soon acquire political rights; resolved to give up plan, rather than exclude them. . . . I hear the Roman Catholics more against it than they were. The bishops all against Pitt's tithe plan. The King said, "I am for it, if it is for the good of the Church, and against it if contra."' 'Pitt as usual,' he wrote to a friend, 'is more fair and open and well-intentioned, and even well-principled, than any other of his class. He is firmly persuaded that the Union will open the most promising way by which the Roman Catholics may obtain political power.'[3]

The Irish Parliament met on January 22, and the great question of the Union was at once raised by the King's Speech, which, without expressly mentioning it, recommended 'some permanent adjustment, which may extend the advantages enjoyed

[1] Portland to Pelham, March 26, 1799. (*Pelham MSS.*)
[2] *Auckland Correspondence*, iv. 77, 78.
[3] Wilberforce's *Life*, ii. 324, 325.

by our sister kingdom to every part of this island,' and would also, at a time when the King's enemies were conspiring to effect a separation, 'provide the most effectual means of maintaining and improving the connection,' and consolidating the British Empire. The Address was moved by Lord Tyrone, the eldest son of Lord Waterford, in a speech in which he carefully pointed out, that it pledged the House to nothing more than a discussion of the question. It was opposed, however, *in limine* by Sir John Parnell; and George Ponsonby, seconded by Sir Lawrence Parsons, moved an amendment, pledging the House to enter into a consideration of what measures might best strengthen the Empire; 'maintaining, however, the undoubted birthright of the people of Ireland to have a resident and independent Legislature, such as it was recognised by the British Legislature in 1782, and was finally settled at the adjustment of all difficulties between the two countries.'

A long and striking debate, extending over more than twenty hours, followed, and it is one of the very few debates in the later sessions of the Irish Parliament which have been separately and fully reported. The immense preponderance of speakers, and I think of ability, was on the side of the Opposition; Lord Castlereagh, however, was supported with some skill by the Knight of Kerry and by Sir John Blaquiere, but especially by a hitherto undistinguished member named William Smith. He was the son of one of the Barons of the Exchequer, and was himself at a later period raised to the bench, and he now proved one of the best speakers and writers in defence of the Union. On the other side there was a brilliant array of talent. Sir Henry Parnell, George Ponsonby, Dobbs, Barrington, Parsons, Hardy, and the late Prime Sergeant Fitzgerald, greatly distinguished themselves, but above all, the eloquence of Plunket dazzled and astonished the House. According to an acute and hostile judge, it turned several votes,[1] and some of its passages of fierce invective are even now well known in Ireland.

The arguments on each side did not differ sensibly from those I have already stated, but the reader of the debate will

[1] There is an interesting description of the effect of Plunket's speech, and of the debate in general, in a letter from R. Griffith to Pelham (*Pelham MSS.*). Griffith says he never witnessed a debate in which so many votes were decided by the eloquence of the speakers.

notice how strenuously and how confidently the Opposition speakers asserted the hostility of the country, and especially of the loyal portion of the country, to the scheme. One speaker boldly said that nine out of ten men were against it, and that the only persons it would really gratify were the United Irishmen. Another acknowledged that if it were the wish of Parliament and of the people it ought to be carried, 'but,' he continued, 'that sense should be fully ascertained, without compulsion or undue influence of any kind. So far as the voice of the people has been yet collected, it is decidedly against it; and nothing but force, actual or implied, with the aid of undue influence, could carry the measure.' 'Admitting,' said a third speaker, 'the right of the people to call for an Union, I ask who, except the Corporation of Cork, has asked for it? Has Parliament, or either House of Parliament, or any body of men whatever?' Parsons, at the conclusion of the debate, said: 'The sentiment of the nation was now so decidedly evinced by the sense of the independent gentlemen in the House against an Union, that he hoped the Minister would never give him an opportunity of speaking on the subject again;' and Plunket declared that 'within these six last weeks a system of black corruption had been carried on within the walls of the Castle, which would disgrace the annals of the worst period of the history of either country.'[1]

It is difficult to say how far these last words are exaggerated, but there is no doubt that they had a large foundation of truth. One member, near the close of the debate, after an ambiguous and hesitating speech, announced his intention of voting for the amendment of the Opposition. Shortly before the division, he rose again to say that he was convinced that he had been mistaken, and would now vote with the Ministers. Barrington states that it was well known in the House, that in the interval he had received from Lord Castlereagh the promise of the peerage he afterwards obtained.[2] Another supporter of the Government was said in the House, without contradiction, to have received his commission as colonel the day before the division.[3]

[1] *Report of the Debate in the House of Commons of Ireland, Jan.* 22, 23, 1799, pp. 16, 39, 48, 61, 89.

[2] Compare the very graphic description in Barrington's *Rise and Fall of the Irish Nation*, ch. xxv., with the report of the speeches of Mr. Trench in the debate, pp. 79, 80. See, too, the extraordinary story about Luke Fox, in Barrington.

[3] *Debate*, p. 82.

The amendment was ultimately rejected by a majority of one, being supported by 105 votes and opposed by 106. The original Address was then carried by 107 to 105. Considering the enormous number of placemen in the House, and the overwhelming majorities which on all normal occasions the Government could command, these votes were equivalent to a severe defeat. George Ponsonby rose and asked the Minister if he intended to persist in the measure. Castlereagh hesitated, and Sir John Parnell interposed, saying that he did not think it fair to press for an immediate answer, but he took the liberty of advising him not to think of the measure, at least while 'the sentiments both of people and Parliament appeared so decisively against it.' Castlereagh said a few words which were construed into acquiescence, but added that he was so convinced of the wisdom of the measure, that 'whenever the House and the nation appeared to understand its merits, he should think it his duty to bring it forward.' A committee was appointed to draw up the Address, and the House then adjourned.[1]

In the House of Lords, on the other hand, where the influence of Clare was supreme, the Government were easily triumphant. Lord Powerscourt and Lord Bellamont led the opposition to the Address, but they were defeated by fifty-two to sixteen, or seventeen including one proxy. The Duke of Leinster and Lord Pery were in the minority. Lord Ely did not vote. Lord Carleton not only voted, but spoke with the majority; but he immediately after wrote to Pelham, that 'many of those who supported the motion for *considering* a proposition for incorporation, could not be depended on at a later stage.' It would be impossible, he said, to estimate the evil consequences on the public mind of having brought the question on at so inauspicious a period, and he added, 'In the present critical situation of affairs, I hope no idea may be entertained of continuing that ferment which I am heartily sorry was raised.'[2]

When the report of the Address came before the Commons, the struggle was renewed by a motion to omit the clause relating to the intended Union. The chief incidents in the debate

[1] R. Griffith to Pelham, Jan. 24, 1799; *Beresford Correspondence*, ii. 194–196.

[2] Lord Carleton to Pelham, Jan. 25; R. Griffith to Pelham, Jan. 24, 1799 (*Pelham MSS.*); see, too, *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 40, 41.

appear to have been a bitter personal altercation between Lord Castlereagh and George Ponsonby; an elaborate and powerful speech against the Union by Sir Lawrence Parsons, who denied the necessity for it, and predicted that if it were pressed on, contrary to the wishes of the people, it might most seriously endanger the connection; and another comprehensive and thoughtful vindication of it by William Smith. He dwelt much upon the advantages the Catholics would obtain from a form of Government under which their claims might be recognised without danger to the Church Establishment, and which would at once relieve them from much sectarian oppression. He expatiated on the natural tendency to divergence which two independent Legislatures under the same Executive were certain to display, and he especially dwelt upon his favourite doctrine of the full competence of Parliament to pass the Union, even without any appeal to the people.

He discussed also a new argument which had been raised against his view. If Parliament, it was said, was absolutely unlimited in its competence, what security, or indeed what meaning, could there be in the compact which Ireland was asked to enter into with England? The Irish members were told, that by surrendering their legislative powers and consenting to an Union, they would secure for all future time, as by a treaty arrangement, their commercial privileges, their proportion of taxation, and their Established Church. But could the articles of Union restrict the power of an omnipotent Parliament? Was it not possible, that the day might come, when the descendants of the Irish Protestants who made the Union, would find themselves a small and unimportant minority in an Imperial Parliament, vainly struggling against the violation of its most fundamental articles? Smith was compelled to acknowledge that the obligation of the Articles of Union would be only an obligation of honour, and not an obligation of law, but he dwelt on the enormous improbability of their violation, and boldly declared that such an act would absolve the subject from all allegiance to the Government that was guilty of it. Among the less conspicuous speakers in this debate was Edgeworth, the father of the illustrious novelist. He said that he had at first believed the measure to be a wise and a good one, but he found it to be obnoxious

to the majority of the people, and therefore thought it his duty to oppose it. In the division, 111 members voted for expunging the contested clause, while only 106 members supported it.[1]

The Speaker Foster took no open part in these debates, but both sides attributed to his immense influence a large part in the defeat of the Government. Clare bitterly accused him of having on this occasion manifested great partiality in the chair,[2] and he had already, in the most public way, declared his implacable hostility to the Union. Just before the meeting of Parliament, the Lord Mayor, Sheriffs, and citizens of Dublin presented him with an address against that measure. In his reply, he spoke of the unexampled rapidity with which Irish prosperity had grown under her Protestant Parliament, and added, 'In my soul I think it [the Union] is fraught with possible consequences, certainly not foreseen by those who bring it forward, that will tend, if not to actual separation, to attempts at least to separate us from Great Britain, to our utter ruin and to the subversion of the British Empire.'[3] It was now clearly seen that there was no chance of bribing him into acquiescence by honours or money.[4] There was no Irishman whose opinion was more important. He was one of the few men of eminent ability and high character, who had been for many years closely attached to the Irish Government. To his administration of the finances, and especially to his legislation about corn bounties, a great part of the recent prosperity of the country was ascribed; he

[1] Coote's *History of the Union*, pp. 47–63; *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 47–50; compare, too, the description in Barrington. Miss Edgeworth says that her father was convinced that the Union was at this time decidedly against the wishes of the great majority of men of sense and property in the nation. (*Life of R. L. Edgeworth*, ii. 222.) Miss Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent*—one of the best pictures ever drawn of one side of Irish life—was published in 1800, when the Union was pending. It concludes with the following curious passage: 'It is a problem of difficult solution to determine, whether an Union will hasten or retard the melioration of this country. The few gentlemen of education who now reside in this country will resort to England. They are few, but they are in nothing inferior to men of the same rank in Great Britain. The best that can happen will be the introduction of British manufacturers in their places. Did the Warwickshire Militia, who were chiefly artisans, teach the Irish to drink beer? Or did they learn from the Irish to drink whisky?'

[2] *Auckland Correspondence*, iv. 80.

[3] *Faulkner's Dublin Journal*, Jan. 19, 22, 1799.

[4] See many letters, written in a spirit of bitter hostility to Foster, in the *Auckland* and the *Beresford Correspondence*.

presided over the House with conspicuous dignity and authority; and the strong part he had taken in opposition to the concession of political power to the Catholics, and his steady support of the most drastic measures of suppression during the rebellion, had made him the special representative of a powerful body of Protestant opinion through the nation. Ponsonby, who took the ostensible leadership of the Opposition, was also a man of great eloquence and great family and parliamentary influence, but he had been usually in opposition. He had won a brilliant victory, but he now tried to push it a step further, and proposed a substantive resolution pledging the House ever 'to maintain the undoubted birthright of Irishmen, by preserving an independent Parliament of Lords and Commons resident in this kingdom.' After some hesitation, however, Fortescue, the member for the county of Louth, expressed his dislike to a resolution which would bind the freedom of the House in future sessions, when the opinion of the country might possibly have changed. Three or four other members concurred, and the resolution was not pressed. Several country gentlemen declared that they wished it clearly to be understood that their hostility was entirely confined to the question of the Union, that they had no intention of joining the Ponsonby faction in systematic opposition, and that the Administration might still count upon their support for all measures that were really necessary for carrying on the government and strengthening the connection. The Address without the passage relating to the Union was agreed to by the House, and presented to the Lord Lieutenant, and the House adjourned for a week.[1]

The exultation in Dublin at the defeat of the Government was fierce and tumultuous. The mob drew the Speaker to his house. Bonfires were kindled, and orders were sent out for a general illumination. Even the General Post Office, though a Government establishment, was a blaze of light. The windows of those who refused to illuminate were broken, and among them those of Lord Clare. His servants fired on the mob, and the Chancellor expressed his hope to Lord Auckland, that they had wounded some of them. Prominent men who had supported

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 47–51; *Beresford Correspondence*, ii. 197–202; Barrington, Coote.

the Union were insulted in the streets, and the lawyers resolved to continue to give Fitzgerald the same precedence at the bar as when he was Prime Sergeant.[1]

The refusal of a House of Commons, in which the Government had hitherto been almost omnipotent, to allow the question of a legislative Union to pass even its first parliamentary stage, would in a country governed on constitutional principles have been deemed decisive, and have secured the abandonment of the measure, at least for that Parliament. The composition of the majority greatly strengthened the case. The Government, it is true, attributed much of their misfortune to the 'disinclination, or, at best, the lukewarm disposition,' of Lord Downshire and Lord Ely. 'Instead of bringing forward eighteen members, as these noble Lords might have done, but five appeared, and one of Lord Downshire's . . . voted against us the second night.' But of all causes, Lord Castlereagh acknowledged that 'what seemed to operate most unfavourably, was the warmth of the country gentlemen, who spoke in great numbers and with much energy against the question.'[2] 'The Opposition,' he said, 'exclusive of the Speaker, Sir J. Parnell and the Ponsonbys, is composed of country gentlemen.'[3] No less than thirty-four county members voted against the Government, while only seventeen supported them.[4] It is no doubt true, as Castlereagh and Beresford said, that personal motives, and among others the prevailing belief that after the Union each county would only send one instead of two members to Parliament, greatly influenced them; but still the fact remains, that in the small section of the Irish Parliament which was really sound, independent, and representative, the preponderance against the Union was overwhelming, while an immense proportion of those who voted for it held offices under the Crown. It was a bold thing to persevere in the measure when, on its very introduction, it was condemned by the metropolis, and by a majority of two to one among the county members.

Great disappointment and irritation appear in the correspondence of its leading Irish supporters. Clare, Cooke, and Beresford united in vehemently blaming Lord Cornwallis. They

[1] *Auckland Correspondence*, iv. 80–82; *Beresford Correspondence*, ii. 196.

[2] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, ii. 143.

[3] Ibid. p. 133.

[4] *Beresford Correspondence*, ii. 210.

said that he had not taken the gentlemen of the country into his confidence, and was governing entirely by two or three men; that by releasing dangerous rebels and repressing Orange zeal, he had discouraged the loyal and encouraged the disloyal; that he had affronted Foster, who of all men had most influence in the House of Commons, had driven the powerful influence of Lord Enniskillen into opposition by the censure he had passed on the court-martial over which that nobleman presided, and had in fine showed a total ignorance of the character of the people, the situation of the country, and the means by which it must be governed. Clare spoke with his usual violence of Ponsonby as 'a malignant knave;' 'but,' he said, 'allowing for the villany and treachery which might have been expected, I always understood there was a certain majority of thirty in support of Government.' Cooke wrote with even greater asperity. 'We could not act,' he wrote, 'without a leader. Lord Cornwallis is nobody, worse than nobody, . . . his silly conduct, his total incapacity, selfishness, and mulishness has alone lost the question. Had Lord Camden continued, had any person succeeded who would have consulted with the gentlemen of the country and kept them in good humour, . . . who would not have let down the spirit of the loyal, who would not have degraded and discountenanced the yeomanry, who would not have turned against him the whole Protestant interest, the measure would have been carried. . . . You must laugh at me for the division in the Commons. In the first place, time was not given to form our numbers, but I was told to consider Lord Downshire and Lord Ely as firm, and Lord de Clifford; and with their full assistance, and of others who had promised, we ought to have divided 148 to 91.' 'Will it not be fair for me,' he asked in another letter, 'to ask that I may be allowed to change my situation into England? I am disgusted here. I feel that everything with respect to this country is managed by the English Ministry with so much ignorance, and so contrary to the representations of those who are acquainted with Irish subjects, that I am perfectly sick. Had any common sense been observed in this measure, or had common suggestions been attended to, the present measure would have succeeded.'[1]

[1] *Auckland Correspondence*, iv. 67, 70, 71, 80, 82–85; see, too, the *Beres-*

Cornwallis, on the other hand, consoled himself by the belief that the proposed Union was not really disagreeable either to the Catholics or the Presbyterians, but he acknowledged that the late experiment showed the impossibility of carrying a measure which was opposed by strong private interests, and not supported by the general voice of the country. 'If ever a second trial of the Union is to be made,' he said, 'the Catholics must be included.'[1]

From England the decision of the Government came in clear and unfaltering language. It was the unanimous opinion of the Ministers, Portland wrote, that nothing that has happened ought to make any change in their intentions or plans. The measure was evidently for the benefit of Ireland, and the good sense of the country would sooner or later recognise the fact. 'I am authorised to assure you,' he wrote, 'that whatever may be the fate of the Address, our determination will remain unaltered and our exertions unabated; and that though discretion and good policy may require that the measure should be suspended by you during this session, I am to desire that you will take care that it shall be understood that it neither is nor ever will be abandoned, and that the support of it will be considered as a necessary and indispensable test of the attachment on the part of the Irish to their connection with this country.'[2] It was accordingly announced that Pitt would at once proceed, as though nothing had happened in Ireland, to submit the intended resolutions on which the Union was to be based, to the British Parliament.

The question of the Union was already before it. On January 22—the same day on which the Irish Parliament was opened—a King's message had been sent down to the British Parliament, recommending, in terms very similar to those employed in the Irish Viceregal speech, a complete and final adjustment of the relations between England and Ireland, as the most effectual means of defeating the designs of the King's enemies to separate the two countries, and of securing, consolidating, and augmenting their resources. Sheridan—the most eminent Irishman in the British Parliament since the death of

ford Correspondence, ii. 208–211; and also, the furious language of Duigenan about the Lord Lieutenant in *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 90.

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 52.

[2] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, ii. 137.

Burke—at once moved an amendment, condemning the introduction of such a measure 'at the present crisis, and under the present circumstances of the Empire.' In the course of a long and powerful speech, he predicted that 'an Union at present, without the unequivocal sense of the Irish people in its favour, . . . would ultimately tend to endanger the connection between the two countries;' that in the existing condition of Ireland, with martial law, and in the presence of 40,000 English troops, the sense of the nation could not be fairly taken; that the undoubted disaffection of Ireland would not be allayed, but aggravated, by the abolition of a loyalist Parliament, and the transfer of authority to the Parliament and nation of England, who, in the words of Lord Clare, 'are more ignorant of the affairs of Ireland than they are of any country in the world.' He spoke also of the finality of the arrangement of 1782, and of the injurious influence which Irish members might exercise on the Imperial Parliament. He found no supporters, and after speeches by Canning and by Pitt, the amendment was negatived without a division.

On January 31, shortly after the news had arrived of the refusal of the Irish House of Commons to take the question into consideration, Pitt rose to move the resolutions for an Union, in an exceedingly elaborate speech, which was one of the only three that he afterwards revised for publication.[1] It contains a most powerful, most authentic, and most comprehensive statement of the whole case for the Union; and although much of its argument had been anticipated in the pamphlet of Cooke and in the speeches of William Smith, it should be carefully considered by everyone who is studying the subject.

Pitt began by acknowledging, in a tone of dignified regret, that the circumstances under which he introduced his resolutions were discouraging. It was in the full right and competence of the Irish Parliament to accept or reject an Union; and while the Irish House of Lords had agreed by a large majority to discuss it, the Irish House of Commons had expressed a repugnance even to consider it, and had done this before the nature of the plan had been disclosed. Believing, however, that a legislative Union was transcendently important to the Empire at a time when foreign and domestic enemies were con-

[1] Stanhope's *Life of Pitt*, iii. 172.

spiring to break the connection, and that it would be eminently useful to every leading interest in Ireland, he considered it his duty to persevere. The question was one on which passion, and prejudice, and a mistaken national pride were at first peculiarly likely to operate, and some time might reasonably be expected to elapse before misconceptions were dispelled, and the advantages of the measure were fully understood. For his part, he said, he was confident that all that was necessary to secure its ultimate adoption was, 'that it should be stated distinctly, temperately, and fully, and that it should be left to the dispassionate and sober judgment of the Parliament of Ireland.'

Starting from the assumption, which was admitted by all loyal men, that a perpetual connection between England and Ireland was essential to the interests of both countries, he contended that the settlement of 1782 was neither wise, safe, nor final. It destroyed the system of government that had before existed, but it substituted nothing in its place. It left two separate and independent Parliaments, 'connected only by this tie, that the third Estate in both countries is the same—that the Executive Government is the same—that the Crown exercises its power of assenting to Irish Acts of Parliament under the Great Seal, and that with respect to the affairs of Ireland it acts by the advice of British Ministers.' This was now the only bond of a connection which was essential to both countries, and it was wholly insufficient to consolidate their strength against a common enemy, to guard against local jealousies and disturbances, or to give Ireland the full commercial, political, and social advantages which she ought to derive from a close connection with Great Britain. He noticed how in 1782 the necessity of some future treaty connection to draw the nations more closely together, had been clearly suggested, and how the commercial propositions of 1785 were intended to effect such a treaty, and he laid great stress upon the language of Foster when, as Irish Chancellor of the Exchequer, he advocated those propositions. Foster then said that things could not remain as they were; that commercial jealousies must increase with independent Legislatures; that without united interests, a mere political Union would fail to secure the connection. But the propositions of 1785 had been rejected; a legislative compact had been tried and found

impracticable, and it remained now only to try a legislative Union. He 'believed there was hardly a man who ever asked himself the question, whether he believed there was a solid, permanent system of connection between the two countries, that ever answered it in the affirmative.'

Pitt then traversed with sonorous though very diffuse rhetoric, but with no real originality, the well-known topics of the Regency; of the dangers that might arise in time of war from a difference between the two Parliaments; of the embarrassment which two distinct Legislatures, independent in their discussions and possibly divergent in their bias, might cause to the foreign policy of the Empire. 'In the general strength of the Empire,' he said, 'both kingdoms are more concerned, than in any particular interests which may belong to either.' Every Court and statesman in Europe knows how greatly a consolidation of the two Legislatures would increase that general power. It would not only give it an increased unity and energy of will, but also diffuse over the feebler portion the vigour of the stronger. To 'communicate to such a mighty limb of the Empire as Ireland is, all the commercial advantages which Great Britain possesses,' to open to one country the markets of the other, and give both a common use of their capital, must immensely add to the resources, and therefore to the strength, of the Empire.

He dwelt much upon the dependence of Ireland on England, as shown during the late convulsions. The naval power of England alone saved Ireland from invasion. English militia, uncompelled by the law, had gone over to protect her. The English Exchequer had lent large sums to the Irish Exchequer. He did not, he said, desire to upbraid Ireland with these circumstances, but to remind her that similar dangers might recur when similar aid was impossible. What, then, is the remedy? 'It is to make the Irish people part of the same community, by giving them a full share of those accumulated blessings which are diffused through Great Britain, a full participation of the wealth and power of the British Empire.'

He then touched—but in terms that were studiously vague and guarded—on the arguments for an Union derived from the anarchical and divided state of Ireland. He spoke of the rebellion, with the 'dreadful and inexcusable cruelties' on the

one side, and the 'lamentable severities' on the other; of the animosities that divided the Catholics from the Protestants, the original inhabitants from the English settlers; of the low level of civilisation in a large part of the island; of the Established Church, opposed to the religion of the great majority of the people; of the land of the country in the hands of a small Protestant minority. For such a state of society, he said, there seemed no remedy 'but in the formation of a general Imperial Legislature, removed from the dangers, and uninfluenced by the prejudices and passions, of that distracted country,' and bringing in its train English capital and English industry. 'No one can say that, in the present state of things, and while Ireland remains a separate kingdom, full concessions could be made to the Catholics, without endangering the State, or shaking the Constitution of Ireland to its centre.' How soon or how late these concessions might be properly discussed, depended on the conduct of the Catholics and on the temper of the time, but it was obvious that a question which 'might endanger the security and shake the Government of Ireland in its separate state,' might be much less dangerous with a United Parliament. He would not, he said, now enter into the detail of the means that might be found to alleviate the distresses of the lower order of Irish Catholics, by relieving them from the pressure of tithes, or by securing under proper regulations a provision for the clergy. He would only say that 'a United legislative body promises a more effectual remedy for their grievances, than could be likely to result from any local arrangements.'

Coming to the more general interests of the country, Pitt maintained that the undoubted recent prosperity of Ireland depended mainly on the recent liberal commercial policy of England. Articles essential to the trade or subsistence of Ireland, and articles which serve as raw materials for her manufactures, are sent from England free of duty; while by the free admission of Irish linen into the English market, by the bounty granted by the British Parliament on Irish linen, and by the duty laid by the same Parliament on foreign linen, the linen manufacture of Ireland had obtained the monopoly in England, which chiefly raised it to its present height. A market had thus been opened to Irish linen, to the amount of three millions. But the power

which conferred these advantages might withdraw them; a legislative Union alone could make that certain and permanent which is now contingent and precarious; and it would be followed by an equality of commercial advantages which would inevitably bring a flood of new prosperity into Ireland.

He replied, by the arguments I have already stated, to the contention that the Irish Legislature was incompetent to pass an Union. In this contention he saw the seeds of the Jacobin doctrine of the sovereignty of the people; a sovereignty always in abeyance, to be called forth as suits the purposes of a party. This doctrine, he said, he would oppose in whatever form and wherever he encountered it. There must in every Government reside somewhere a supreme, absolute, and unlimited authority. It is impossible that the sovereignty should be anywhere but in the supreme Legislature, nor is it otherwise in any system of human jurisprudence. Every law restraining the privileges or distinguishing the rights of electors, every law of enfranchisement and disfranchisement, implies this doctrine, and the Parliament of Ireland, which had very lately associated itself with a great body of Catholics in Ireland, was equally competent to associate itself with a Protestant Parliament in Great Britain.

Some eloquent sentences followed about the complete compatibility of an Union with every true feeling of national pride, and about the higher level of security and prosperity, of moral, political, and social life, which was likely to result to Ireland from an increased infusion of English influence. Does an Union, he asked, by free consent and on just and equal terms, deserve to be branded as a proposal for subjecting Ireland to a foreign yoke? Is it not rather the voluntary association of two great countries, which seek their common benefit in one empire, in which each will retain its proportionate weight and importance, under the security of equal laws, reciprocal affection, and inseparable interests, and in which each will acquire a strength that will render it invincible? Prophecy bore a large part in these discussions; and to those who view them in the light of later years, it is not the least instructive part. The predictions of Pitt were, that the Union would be of all measures the most likely to give Ireland security, quiet, and internal repose; that

it would remove the chief bar to her internal advancement in wealth and civilisation; that it would vastly augment her material prosperity, and that it would tend powerfully to unite the higher and lower orders of her people, and to diffuse among all classes a healthy predilection for English habits.

Pitt concluded his speech by strenuously denying that the scheme was intended to bring Ireland under the burden of the English National Debt, or make her the subject of increased taxation, and he promised special provisions to guard against the danger. He then moved a series of resolutions affirming the expediency of the Union, and sketching—but in very wide and general terms—its leading provisions. The amount of the Irish representation in both Houses was still unfixed, but a few fundamental points were already affirmed. The succession to the Throne was to be the same. The Churches in England and Ireland were to be preserved as they are 'now by law established.' The subjects of his Majesty in the two countries were to be placed on the same footing in all matters of trade and navigation through the whole Empire, and in all treaties with foreign Powers. Articles of import and export now duty free between England and Ireland, were to remain so. On other articles moderate and equal duties were to be agreed to by the two Parliaments, and they were to be diminished equally with respect to both kingdoms, but in no case increased, and a similar equality was to be established in all questions relating to foreign goods and to internal duties. The debts of the two countries were to be kept separate. The ordinary expenses of the United Kingdom, in peace and war, were to be defrayed by the two countries in fixed proportions, which were to be settled at the Union. All laws in force and all courts established at the time of the Union, were to remain, subject to such changes as might be made by the Imperial Parliament.

These resolutions were for nearly three weeks under the discussion of the English House of Commons, before they were sent up to the Lords. The greater part of the small Opposition had at this time seceded, and Fox did not once appear upon the scene, though he wrote to Grattan expressing his unqualified hostility to the scheme.[1] Sheridan, however, fought a hopeless

[1] See his letter to Grattan, Feb. 4, 1799. He described it as 'one of

battle with conspicuous earnestness and courage, and he was supported by a few able men, and especially by Grey and Laurence. The minority sometimes sank as low as fifteen, and never at this time rose above twenty-four. In one of the debates, Dr. Laurence, who had been an intimate friend of Burke, mentioned the opinion of that great statesman. Burke, he said, did not approve of a legislative Union. He considered 'that the two countries had now grown up under circumstances which did not admit of such an incorporation,' but he thought that the Constitution of 1782 ought to have included, or been accompanied by, a positive compact, which, while leaving Ireland 'the entire and absolute power of local legislation,' explicitly defined the terms of her connection with England, and bound her on all questions of peace or war to stand or fall with Great Britain. In times of tranquillity, Burke said, such a stipulation would be unnecessary; in times of extreme irritation and mutual animosity it would be liable to be disregarded; 'but there are doubtful and tremulous moments in the fate of every empire, when he judged that it might be useful to have that, which is now the feeling of all, confirmed and fixed by the guarantee of the national faith,' and Burke regretted that he had not opposed recognition of Irish independence without such a stipulation.[1]

From the point of view of English interests, almost the only objection which appears to have been seriously felt, was the possible effect of the infusion of Irish members into the British Parliament. Many thought that it would add an overwhelming weight to the influence of the Crown, and Laurence acutely dwelt on the great danger to parliamentary Government, if the Irish members formed a distinct and separate body, acting in concert amid the play of party politics. 'They were certainly,' he said, 'by no means deficient in the great popular talent of eloquence. But if they should hereafter exercise it within these

the most unequivocal attempts at establishing the principles, as well as the practice of despotism, that has been made in our times.' 'Even the French,' he adds, 'in their cursed fraternisations, pretend at least that they act in consequence of the desire of the *people* of the several countries. ... The truth is, I never was a friend to the Union, as a speculative question, nor should like it even if it were the general wish of Ireland, much less at such a time and in such circumstances.' (Grattan's *Life*, iv. 435, 436.)

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxxiv. 311. See, too, vol. vi. p. 512. Fox also, in a speech before the Whig Club, is said to have mentioned Burke's opinion of the impolicy of a legislative Union. See Coote's *History of the Union*, p. 292.

walls in any degree corresponding with the example which they have lately given in their own proper theatre, where they continued a very animated debate for little less than the complete circle of a day and night, he was apprehensive that we might find the public business a little impeded in its progress.'[1]

On the whole the arguments of Sheridan and his small band of followers, were but little directed against the abstract merits of a legislative Union. Their main position was, that no such Union could strengthen the connection, if it was carried by corruption or intimidation, without the free consent and real approbation of the two Parliaments and nations. In the existing state of Ireland, they said, the opinion of the people could not be fairly taken. The most efficacious arguments of the Ministry were bribes to particular sections of the community, and scarcely veiled threats that, if the Union was rejected, Great Britain would withdraw her protection in time of war, and her assistance to the Irish linen trade, and would refuse her assent to necessary Irish reforms. The Irish House of Commons had condemned the scheme in its very first stage, and the majority against it included a most decisive majority of the representatives of the landed interest. If the members were uninfluenced by corrupt means, it never would pass there. Outside Parliament, Cork and Limerick alone had expressed anything like approbation of it, and Cork had been bribed by the hope of a great dockyard. 'The Orange party,' said one speaker, 'had been the foremost and the loudest in the cry against the Union; while, on the other hand, no one considerable body of Catholics, or of any other description, had been gained to its support.' The very proposal had exercised the worst influence, and Grey predicted that an Union so carried would not be acquiesced in, and that attempts would one day be made to undo it. It was added, too, that 'all agreed that the rapid progress of the sister kingdom in trade, in manufactures, and in agriculture, and their concomitant opulence within the last twenty years, down to the breaking out of the late disastrous rebellion, had been unexampled in the history of that island, and perhaps only exceeded in Great Britain.'

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxxiv. 316, 317. It was understood that Dr. Laurence was the special mouthpiece in the House of Commons of Lord Fitzwilliam. (*Auckland Correspondence*, iv. 89.)

Dundas, who was the warmest supporter in the Ministry, of the Irish Catholics, spoke very earnestly and very ably in favour of the measure. He read to the House the famous peroration of the speech of Lord Belhaven against the Scotch Union, and showed, point by point, how every prediction of evil from that measure had been falsified; how all the elements of Scotch prosperity had developed under its influence; how the feeling of hostility to it, which once undoubtedly existed, had completely subsided. He maintained that the root of the diseased condition of Ireland was, that there was no real confidence between the mass of the people and the ascendency Parliament, that 'the whole power of the country was vested in one-fourth of the people, and that fourth was separated from the other three-fourths by religious distinctions, heightened and envenomed by ancient and hereditary animosities.' For curing this state of things and allaying animosities, which were largely due to mutual jealousies and fears, an incorporating Union was the only safe and efficacious remedy, and it would give Ireland a power over the executive and general policy of the Empire, which would far more than compensate her for the loss of her separate Legislature. The Ministry, in introducing their resolutions in spite of the hostile vote of the Irish Commons, desired to place before the dispassionate judgment of the Parliament and people of Ireland, 'what the English Parliament was willing to share with them, without attempting the smallest interference with their independence.' As long as the present unnatural situation of Ireland continued, the Irish Catholics must inevitably labour under the disadvantages of strong prejudices, jealousies, and animosities, and Dundas very earnestly maintained that nothing could be so conducive to their interests as a legislative Union.

Sheridan at once replied, that this ascendency Parliament of Irish gentlemen, having already conceded the franchise to the Catholics, had been perfectly ready during Lord Fitzwilliam's Viceroyalty to admit them as members, and would have certainly done so if the Government of which Dundas was a member, had not suddenly recalled the Lord Lieutenant. 'At any rate,' added Laurence, 'his recall was never ascribed to the apprehension of any difficulty in Parliament from his avowed support of the Catholics; there was no appearance of such difficulty in any

quarter; and no Lord Lieutenant ever brought back with him from that shore such cordial effusions of veneration and affection, both from the Parliament and the people.' This was a true statement and a forcible argument; but it was also true, that Irish politics and Irish opinion had enormously changed since 1795. Canning, in one of his speeches, went farther than Dundas. He not only argued that Catholic emancipation could not take place in an Irish Parliament, but even hinted that if the Union was not carried, it might be necessary to refortify the Protestant ascendency, by reviving the old penal code against the Catholics.[1]

In Ireland, meanwhile, the Government were not idle. It is stated that no less than 10,000 copies of Pitt's speech were gratuitously circulated at the public expense,[2] and other methods more effectual than appeals to popular reason were employed. Lord Castlereagh wrote that he would despair of the success of the Union at any future period, so weighty was the opposition of the country gentlemen in the House of Commons, if he had not been convinced that their repugnance was much more due to their personal interest, than to a fixed aversion to the principle of Union. He represented, therefore, that the proposed scheme of representation must be materially changed. It had at first been intended to restrict the representation of each Irish county in the Imperial Parliament to a single member. Castlereagh now argued that it should continue, as at present, to be two. By this means, he hoped the most powerful opposition to the Union might be disarmed, especially as a seat in the Imperial Parliament would be a higher object of ambition than a seat in the Parliament in Dublin.[3]

The question of the borough representation was a very difficult one. The English Government laid it down as a fundamental condition, that the whole Irish representation should not exceed 100, and it was much desired that the principle of giving pecuniary compensation to the borough owners should, if possible, be avoided. It was agreed that the larger towns should send in a regular but diminished representation, and it was at first pro-

[1] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, iii. 119. Compare *Parl. Hist.* xxxiv. 228–230.

[2] See Foster's speech (April 11, 1799).

[3] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, ii. 143, 144, 149–153.

posed, that the small boroughs should be grouped according to the Scotch system, and afterwards that 108 small boroughs should send in 54 members by a system of alternation, each borough returning a member to every second Parliament. This system, Lord Cornwallis said, would no doubt to a certain degree affect the value of borough property, and probably disincline the patrons to an Union, but he believed 'that means might be found without resorting to the embarrassing principle of avowed compensation, so as to satisfy the private interests of at least a sufficient number of the individuals affected, to secure the measure against any risk arising from this consideration.'[1] Castlereagh, however, was now convinced that the principle of granting pecuniary compensation for boroughs must be adopted. There were eighty-six boroughs, he said, which were so close as to be strictly private property.[2]

Another important question was, how the measures which were likely to be taken by the Opposition in order to prevent an Union, were to be met. The Union had been proposed mainly on the principle that two independent Legislatures had a tendency to separate; that it was necessary to give an additional strength to the connection; and that this measure would offer great particular advantages to many important interests in Ireland. Cornwallis believed that it would be the policy of the Opposition, to take up these several points, and to endeavour to remedy them without an Union. The first question was the admission of Catholics to Parliament. There were already signs that the Opposition were making overtures to the Catholics, and it was probable that some who had hitherto been determined opponents of their emancipation would consent to it, if by doing so they could detach them from the Government, and avoid the abolition of the Parliament. The Catholics, on the other hand, were likely to prefer emancipation without an Union, to emancipation with one. In the one case, they would probably by degrees gain an ascendency; in the other, their position would always be an inferior one. 'Were the Catholic question to be now carried, the great argument for an Union would be lost, at least as far as the Catholics are concerned.'

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 7; *Castlereagh Correspondence*, ii. 20.

[2] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, ii. 149–153.

It was probable also, the Lord Lieutenant thought, that the party opposed to the Union would meet the argument drawn from the Regency dispute, by a Bill making the Regent of England *ipso facto* Regent of Ireland; that they would again urge their readiness to enter into a commercial arrangement with England; that they would call upon the Government to make at once the provision for the Catholic and Presbyterian clergy, which the Government writers and speakers now pronounced so desirable, and that finally they would take up the question of the regulation of tithes, 'the most comprehensive cause of public discontent in Ireland.' 'Your Grace must be aware,' wrote Cornwallis, 'that the party will carry the feeling of the country more with them upon the question of tithes, than any other. They will press Government to bring it forward, and impute their refusing to do so, to a determination to force the question of Union, by withholding from the people advantages which might be extended to them equally by the Irish Legislature.'[1]

This despatch was submitted to the deliberation of the Cabinet in England, and the Duke of Portland lost no time in communicating his instructions to the Irish Government. The ultimate enactment of the Union was now to be the supreme and steady object of all English policy in Ireland. If the question of Catholic emancipation was introduced, the Government must oppose it with all the resources at their disposal, and they must clearly state that they would never permit it to be carried, except on the condition of an Union, and by the means of an United Parliament. On the question of tithes, they must hold an equally decisive language. This question must be settled on the same principles in the two countries, and no plan of commutation must be entertained in Ireland, unless the British Legislature had previously seriously taken up the question. The proposed Regency Bill seemed free from objection, and England would gladly receive from Ireland any unconditional grant towards the general expenses of the Empire, but a commercial compact could only be made by the agreement of the two Parliaments. If the payment of priests and Presbyterian ministers was proposed, the Irish Government might give it a favourable reception, but they

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 53–55.

should call upon its promoters to produce a specific plan of their measures in detail.[1]

The very violence of the resentment which was aroused in the Irish Parliament and in Dublin by the introduction of the Union, appeared to the Ministers an additional reason for pressing it on. 'The language and conduct both within and without doors,' wrote Castlereagh in a confidential letter to Wickham, 'has been such on the late occasion, as to satisfy every thinking man that if the countries are not speedily incorporated, they will ere long be committed against each other.'[2] There were signs, which were deemed extremely alarming, of attempts at coalition between the Orangemen and the Catholics,[3] and such a coalition in case of a French invasion might prove fatal.

There were also, however, slight but undoubted indications of an improvement in the prospects of the measure, especially after it became known that the principle of compensation would be largely adopted. The most encouraging of these signs appeared among the Catholics, and it is among the clerical and lay leaders of that body that the measure seems to have found its most sincere well-wishers. Both Lord Kenmare and Lord Fingall were among the number, and when George Ponsonby proposed to the former to introduce under certain condi-

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 59; *Castlereagh Correspondence*, ii. 154–159. 'You will not omit to take the earliest opportunity and the most effectual means of convincing the Roman Catholics, that it is needless for them to entertain any expectation of further indulgences, as long as the Parliament of Ireland remains in its present state.' (Portland to Cornwallis, Jan. 30, 1799. R.O.)

[2] Castlereagh to Wickham, Feb. 4, 1799.

[3] I have already quoted a letter of McNally about this. For other evidence see *Castlereagh Correspondence*, ii. 169; iii. 87; *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 58. There is a curious letter among the papers of Pelham, signed W. H. and undated, but evidently of this time. The writer said that the main danger was now that the Protestants would unite with the Catholics, promising them emancipation. 'Some of the most violent Orangists have opposed the measure [the Union], and now talk of combining with their most deadly enemies the Catholics, in order to lay the question asleep for ever.' Such a junction, the writer says, would prevent an Union for years. The Government must do all in their power to win the Catholics, and they must appeal to individual interests much more freely than they had done. 'When they next make the attempt, let them ballast the vessel steadily with gold, and hang abundance of coronets, ribbons, and mitres to the shrouds. If the virtuous pride of the minister will not suffer him to stoop to this, he will never carry an Union with Hibernia. He must not only flatter her vanity, but fill her purse, for if ever there was a spot on the globe where interest is everything, it is this very country.' (*Pelham MSS.*)

tions a motion for repealing the remaining Acts which imposed restrictions on the Catholics, the offer was declined.[1] Dr. Moylan, the Catholic Bishop of Cork, wrote expressing the deepest regret at the rejection of the Union. 'It is impossible,' he wrote, 'to extinguish the feuds and animosities which disgrace this kingdom, and give it the advantages of its natural and local situation, without an Union with Great Britain. . . . The tranquillity and future welfare of this poor distracted country rest in a great degree thereon. The earlier it is accomplished, the better.'[2] When Corry accepted the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer, from which Parnell had been removed, he was obliged to go to his constituents at Newry for re-election, and an attempt was made to oppose him, but it was defeated mainly through the influence of Archbishop Troy and through the action of the Catholic portion of the electorate. 'The Catholics stuck together like the Macedonian phalanx,' wrote a Newry priest, 'and with ease were able to turn the scale in favour of the Chancellor of the Exchequer.'[3] Bishop Delany expressed a strong opinion in favour of the Union, and Dr. Bodkin, who was one of the most important priests in the West of Ireland, and who had for many years been the agent of the majority of the secular prelates at Rome, wrote from Galway, 'My countrymen are very warm, violent, and easily roused, but they as soon fall back and return to a better sense. I am far from thinking the Union lost; a little time will rally and bring back the disheartened and disaffected. It is the only means left to save from ruin and destruction that poor, infatuated Ireland.'[4]

Archbishop Troy at the same time exerted himself earnestly and efficaciously to prevent any Catholic demands for emancipation which might embarrass the Ministers, and a considerable body of the Catholic prelates in Ireland were in close confidential communication with them. The proposal for the payment of the Catholic clergy, being connected with the Union, was postponed by the adverse vote of the Irish House of Commons, but the prelates authorised the Archbishops of Armagh and Dublin and the Bishop of Meath to treat with Lord

[1] Portland to Cornwallis (secret and confidential), Jan. 30, 1799.

[2] Dr. Moylan to Pelham, March 9, 1799.

[3] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, ii. 168.

[4] Ibid. ii. 188; iii. 89, 90.

Castlereagh on the subject whenever he thought fit to resume it.[1] A proposal was for some time under discussion for conceding to the Catholics in the Act of Union the offices reserved in the Act of 1793, leaving the question of sitting in the Legislature to the decision of the United Parliament.[2] It was not, however, ultimately pressed, and Lord Castlereagh on the whole appears to have been unfavourable to it. 'Any appearance of eagerness on the part of Government,' he thought, 'would argue weakness, and bear too much the appearance of a bargain, to serve the cause;' and he added, 'I conceive the true policy is, by a steady resistance of their claims, so long as the countries remain separate, to make them feel that they can be carried only with us, through an Union.'[3]

On the whole, Cornwallis was probably justified when he spoke of 'a large proportion of the Catholics' being in favour of the Union;[4] and in other quarters the measure, in the opinion of the Government, was making some way. One very important acquisition was Lord Ely, who now declared his determination to throw all his influence into its scale.[5] In the North the feeling was at least not strongly hostile, and Alexander wrote to Pelham that on the whole he even considered it favourable, 'but lukewarmedly.' The linen merchants and the great majority of the inhabitants of Londonderry, he said, were for it, but the question was looked on as one which chiefly concerned the gentlemen, and it did not arouse any strong popular interest.[6] 'The public mind,' wrote Cooke in the beginning of April, 'is, I think, much suspended on the subject. There is little passion except among the bar and the few interested leaders in the Commons. The Protestants think it will diminish their power, however it may secure their property. The Catholics think it will put an end to their ambitious hopes, however it may give them ease and equality. The rebels foresee in it their annihilation.'[7] 'The opinion of the loyal part of the public,' wrote Cornwallis, 'is, from everything that I can learn, changing fast in favour of the Union; but I have good reason to believe that the United Irishmen,

[1] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, ii. 172; iii. 84, 85.

[2] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 63, 64.

[3] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, ii. 171.

[4] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 84.

[5] Ibid. iii. 80.

[6] Alexander to Pelham, Feb. 18, 1799.

[7] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 87.

who form the great mass of the people, are more organised and more determined than ever in their purposes of separation, and their spirits are at this moment raised to the highest pitch in the confidence of soon seeing a French army in this country.'[1]

The open rebellion was over, and the military force of all kinds at this time in Ireland, is said to have exceeded 137,000 men,[2] yet the condition of great tracts of the country had hardly ever been worse. The old crime of houghing cattle had broken out with savage fury in Mayo and Galway. It does not appear on this occasion to have been due to any recent conversion of arable land into pasture, and it is impossible to say how far, or in what proportions, it was due to the resentment and misery produced by the military excesses that had followed the defeat of Humbert, to agrarian motives, or to deliberate political calculation. The pretexts chiefly put forward were a desire to lower rents, and abolish middlemen, but Cornwallis believed that there was some evidence that the United Irishmen were connected with the outburst, and that it was part of a plan to stop the usual supply of cattle to the Cork market, where the English fleet was provisioned.[3] The new Prime Sergeant, who was himself from Galway, gave the House of Commons a graphic account of the state of a great part of Connaught. 'Hordes of armed ruffians, in number forty to fifty in a gang, traversed the country every night, over a tract of sixty miles, houghing the cattle of gentlemen and farmers, and murdering all who dare to oppose them. In this way, property to the amount of 100,000*l.* has been destroyed, within the last two months, in the counties of Galway and Mayo. Every man whose cattle were thus houghed was forbidden, on pain of murder to himself and his family, to expose those beasts in any market; so that they had no alternative, but either to bury the flesh, or give it to the country people for little or nothing. . . . Against this infernal and destructive system no man dares appeal to public justice. . . . If any man prosecuted one of the offenders, he did it at the moral certainty of being almost immediately murdered.' The same

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 81.

[2] See Grattan's *Life*, v. 31. It appears from an estimate presented by Lord Castlereagh to the House of Commons (Feb. 11), of the charge of the regiments serving in Ireland and belonging to the British establishment, that those troops amounted to 23,210 men.' (Plowden, ii. 921.)

[3] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 60, 66, 67. This was also the opinion of the Prime Sergeant and the Attorney-General.

fate hung over every magistrate who sent a hougher to gaol, every witness who gave evidence against him, every juryman who convicted him. Well-dressed men led the parties, and at least one man who had played a conspicuous part in political rebellion in Connaught was shown to be a leader. A rich farmer, who had refused to take the United Irish oath, had no less than 250 bullocks houghed, and was reduced almost to beggary.[1] 'The rabble,' said the Attorney-General, 'are told that by pursuing this practice, they will get land cheap; the leaders know that in distressing the British power, they will advance the interest of the French Directory.' 'Do not expect,' the Attorney-General continued, 'that the country gentlemen will dare to serve on juries if the forfeit of their property is to be the result of their verdicts, and if when that property has been already destroyed, their lives are to be the next sacrifice. Such is the situation of the most tranquil province of Ireland. . . . The gentry are obliged to abandon their estates, and driven into the towns; and to the honour of the Roman Catholic gentry of that country be it spoken, that they have been the most active to repress these outrages, and have been the most severe sufferers from their extent. . . . There are two counties of your kingdom in which the King's judges have not dared for one year past to carry their commission.'

A member named Ormsby mentioned, in the course of the debate, that he was present at Carrick-on-Shannon, when six traitors were acquitted in spite of the clearest evidence. The judge said that he must adjourn the assizes, as no justice could be obtained. One of the jurymen then stood up and freely acknowledged this, adding, 'My Lord, what can we do? A coal of fire, set in our barn or the thatch of our house, destroys our property, possibly the lives of our wives and children. If you want verdicts of conviction, your juries must be summoned from garrison towns, where the individual may look for protection.' Another member mentioned a case in the county of Limerick, in which a man ventured on his own part, and on that of eight other persons, to prosecute an offender who had plundered and destroyed their property. All nine were murdered in a single night.

[1] This last fact is mentioned in a letter from St. George Daly (Galway) to Castlereagh, Feb. 9, 1799. (I.S.P.O.)

No part of the country, however, was worse than the neighbourhood of Dublin itself, for the scattered fragments of the rebel forces that had haunted the Wicklow hills, were now converted into small bands of robbers and murderers. Every country gentleman who continued to live in his house, required an armed garrison. 'Does a night pass,' said the Attorney-General in Parliament, 'without a murder in the county? Do gentlemen know that the amount of the deliberate and midnight murders in that small district of the county called Fingal, within a short time past, exceeds two hundred? . . . It may be said that this county, as indeed almost all Ireland, is proclaimed, but even so the military officers cannot act without a magistrate, and where are the magistrates to be found? . . . Are not your mail coaches plundered to an immense amount almost within view of the city?' 'It is a notorious fact,' said the Prime Sergeant, 'that no man could travel, even at noonday, six miles from the capital in any direction, without the moral certainty of being robbed or murdered by gangs of those banditti.'[1]

In the beginning of March, the houghing of cattle spread fiercely in Meath, and it was said to have also appeared in the South.[2] In the county of Cork, the tithe war was raging, accompanied with the cruel persecution of all employed in collecting tithes. Cornwallis believed that the whole of the South was prepared to rise the moment a French soldier set his foot on shore; in the middle of March he pronounced this part of Ireland to be by far the most agitated, and he inferred that it was the quarter where a French invasion was most likely to take place. Ulster was more quiet than the other provinces, but signs of disturbance had appeared in the county of Antrim, where the houses of some loyalists had been plundered.[3]

The Government about this time obtained some additional secret information, and they appear to have discovered the existence of a United Irish executive in Dublin.[4] An eminent Dublin surgeon named Wright was arrested on a charge of high treason, and on finding, from the questions of Cooke, that his conduct

[1] See the very interesting debate on Feb. 26 in *Faulkner's Dublin Journal*, Feb. 28, 1799.

[2] Ibid. March 5, 1799.

[3] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 60, 61, 76, 77.

[4] Private information, Feb. 1799 (I.S.P.O.). See, too, *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 67.

was known, he burst into tears and made a confession, which Castlereagh sent to England. He told Cooke, that he believed that the danger from the United Irish conspiracy had vanished, since the men of property and ability connected with it had been killed, taken, or banished; but that the Defender system, which was purely Catholic, and was aiming at the establishment of popery, had taken its place, and was rapidly drawing within its circle the great body of the lower Catholics. Having dressed the wounds of more than 500 rebels, he had learnt to know their real feeling; he had found them to be inspired by a fierce religious fanaticism, and he believed that this spirit was steadily growing. The upper ranks of Catholics in general merely looked for consequence in the State; and if they were on an equal footing with the Protestants, they would be soon loyal monarchy men. But the lower ranks were entirely governed by their priests, and especially by the friars, who were 'a very good-for-nothing set;' and they never could be reformed, 'but by their priests and by better education.' Orange societies, and many acts of violence perpetrated by private irresponsible loyalists, fanned the flame. Among the young men in Dublin, especially among the merchant clerks and shopmen, there were many active rebels of the old type, and young Robert Emmet was their guiding spirit. 'The whole country would rise if there were to be a French invasion.' Other information pointed to the leading part Robert Emmet was beginning to take, and in May the Government gave orders for his arrest, but he succeeded in escaping to the Continent. Castlereagh himself, not long after, expressed his belief, that the United system was in general laid aside, 'the Presbyterians having become Orangemen, and the Catholics Defenders.'[1] But it was long before conspiracy of the United Irish description had wholly ceased, and it was feared that the near prospect of invasion might at any time revive it.[2]

The speeches I have last quoted, took place at the introduc-

[1] Wickham to Castlereagh, April 14; Castlereagh to Wickham, May 1, 6; Castlereagh to King, August 21, 1799. (R.O.)

[2] A later letter of Pollock throws a little light on this subject. He says, 'With regard to the rebel leaders in Ulster, I delivered to Mr. Marsden after the rebellion, an alphabetical book which I made out, and which contains the names of every field officer of the rebels in that province. Fifteen out of every twenty of them are and have been (by a mistaken and misplaced lenity, in my judgment) at large. If *an invasion were even probable*, every man of them ought to be taken up; and as to the Dublin leaders, Mr.

tion of one of the most severe of the many stringent coercion Bills carried by the Irish Parliament. The proclamation of May 24, which had been approved by both Houses of Parliament, had ordered the general officers to punish by death and otherwise, according to martial law, every person concerned in the rebellion; but now that the actual struggle was over, and the courts were open, martial law was plainly illegal. The impossibility of the two jurisdictions acting concurrently had been foreseen, and some months earlier, Lord Pery had recommended a Bill authorising the military authorities to try by court-martial persons engaged in the rebellion, alleging that without such law the exercise of martial law could only be justified by the strictest necessity, and that this necessity would be difficult to define. The Government, however, while believing military law to be indispensable in the unsettled state of the country, considered also that less violence was done to the Constitution by giving indemnity to those who had acted illegally for the preservation of the State, than by enacting a law formally authorising martial law when the courts were sitting.[1] The collision between Lord Kilwarden and the military authorities about the execution of Wolfe Tone, brought the difficulty into clear relief, and the multiplying outrages throughout the country seemed to require a new and very drastic remedy. Past transgressions of the law, which had taken place since October 6, 1798, for the purpose of suppressing the rebellion, preserving the public peace, and for the safety of the State, were condoned by the very comprehensive Indemnity Act which received the royal assent on March 25.[2] But, in addition to this measure, a new Act was carried, placing Ireland, at the will of the Lord Lieutenant, formally and legally under military law.

The preamble noticed that Lord Camden on March 30, 1798, had, with the advice of the Privy Council, directed the military commanders in Ireland to employ all their forces to suppress rebellion; that the order of May 24, commanding them to

Cooke has had from me, from time to time, the names of every man of them. Those that are the most dangerous, are, I think, the *last Executive Directory*, who had arranged a new rebellion in the end of 1799 and 1800. (J. Pollock to the Right Hon. C. Abbot, Aug. 16, 1801, *Colchester MSS.*)

[1] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, i. 446, 447.

[2] 39 Geo. III. c. 3.

punish by death or otherwise, according to martial law, all persons assisting in the rebellion, had received the approbation of both Houses of Parliament; that, although this measure had proved so far efficacious as to permit the course of common law partially to take place, very considerable parts of the kingdom were still desolated by a rebellion, which took the form of acts of savage violence and outrage, and rendered the ordinary course of justice impossible; and that many persons who had been guilty of the worst acts during the rebellion, and had been taken by his Majesty's forces, had availed themselves of the partial restoration of the ordinary course of the common law, to evade the punishment of their crimes. The Bill accordingly empowered the Lord Lieutenant, as long as this rebellion continued, and notwithstanding the opening of the ordinary courts of justice, to authorise the punishment by death or otherwise, according to martial law, of all persons assisting in the rebellion, or maliciously attacking the persons or properties of the King's loyal subjects in furtherance of it; the detention of all persons suspected of such crimes, and their summary trial by court-martial. No act done in pursuance of such an order could be questioned, impeded, or punished by the courts of common law, and no person duly detained under the powers created by this Act, could be released by a writ of Habeas Corpus.[1]

This Act, which invested the Lord Lieutenant with some of the extreme powers of a despotic ruler, has often been represented as a part of the Union campaign, intended to repress opposition to an unpopular measure. It was opposed partly on that ground in the House of Commons, and a few members made strenuous efforts to modify its provisions, and to restrict its area and its duration.[2] It was, however, the strong belief of the country members that some such Act was necessary, and their concurrence enabled it to pass without difficulty. Rightly or wrongly, indeed, the Irish Parliament was always ready to meet outbursts of anarchy by measures of repression, much

[1] 39 Geo. III. c. 11. This Act is interesting in constitutional history for the emphasis with which it asserts 'the undoubted prerogative of his Majesty, for the public safety, to resort to the exercise of martial law against open enemies or traitors.' (See Stephen's *History of Crimina Law*, i. 211.)

[2] Plowden, ii. 958, 959; *Faulkner's Journal*, Feb. 28, 1799. It was ultimately decided, that the Act should expire two months after the opening of the ensuing session of Parliament.

prompter and much more drastic than English opinion would have tolerated; and one or two members in the course of the discussion, and a considerable body of excited opinion outside the House, ascribed the disastrous condition of the country chiefly to the excessive leniency of Lord Cornwallis, and to his departure from the system of Lord Camden. Representations to this effect had been persistently sent to England, and the English Ministers concurred with them, and were by no means satisfied with the moderation of the Lord Lieutenant; but Castlereagh loyally supported his chief, urging that a severity which was necessary while the rebellion was at its height, would be inexpedient after its repression, and that, in fact, the list of persons executed or transported under Lord Cornwallis had been very considerable.[1] The Bill for establishing martial law, was not altogether approved of in England, and some amendments were introduced into it, at the request of the English Ministry;[2] but there is, I believe, no real ground for supposing that it was intended for any other object than the ostensible ones, though supporters of the Government are accused of having sometimes employed the powers it gave them, to prevent meetings against the Union. It was, however, maintained with much reason, that a time when martial law was in force, was not one for pressing through a vast constitutional change, unasked for by the country, and violently opposed by a great section of its people.

The state of anarchy that prevailed had undoubtedly a great part in convincing many, both in England and Ireland, that a new system of government had become absolutely necessary. 'The Union,' Dundas wrote about this time, 'will certainly not improve our Houses of Parliament. In all other respects it will answer, and without it, Ireland is a country in which it will be impossible for any civilised being to live, and it will be such a

[1] See, for the exact figures, p. 253. *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 62, 63, 67, 69, 70, 90. In a private letter from England, Wickham said, 'At present there is a general, I may say an universal persuasion, that lenient measures have been carried much too far, and your Lordship may rely upon what I say, when I assure you that that which was matter of doubt when your Lordship was in England, is now settled into a fixed opinion, accompanied by a disposition to attribute the calamities with which Ireland seems now threatened, to a departure from the system adopted by Lord Camden.' (Wickham to Castlereagh (private), March 4, 1799. R.O.)

[2] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, ii. 184, 197, 198; *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 74 76.

thorn in our side as to render us for ever uncomfortable, let our own affairs be conducted as well and prosperously as it is possible for the wisdom of man to do.'[1] The Government speakers, in advocating the Bill for establishing martial law, painted the situation of the country in the darkest colours. Lord Clare told the House of Lords that, 'in the western parts of this kingdom, it was impossible for any gentleman of property to be safe, even within his own habitation, unless every village throughout the country was garrisoned, and every gentleman's house a barrack,' and that, 'if there was no other cause, the enormous expense of keeping up such a military force must sink the country.' 'What is now the situation of the loyalists of this kingdom?' asked the Prime Sergeant. 'They are comparatively a small body of men, thinly scattered over the face of the island, surrounded on all sides by an innumerable, inveterate, irreclaimable host of sworn enemies. What security have, then, the loyalists of Ireland for their safety at this moment, but in their own personal bravery, and the protection of a great military force?'[2] 'The United Irishmen,' wrote Cornwallis, 'are whetting their knives, to cut the throats of all the nobility and gentry of the island.'[3]

A few other parliamentary proceedings may be briefly mentioned. Dobbs—the honest, amiable, but eccentric member who has been so often mentioned—brought in a series of resolutions asserting the expediency of a reform of Parliament, the immediate admission of the six or eight Catholic peers into the House of Lords, the admission of Catholics into the House of Commons as soon as peace was restored, a commutation of tithes, and a moderate provision for the Dissenting ministers and the Catholic secular clergy. He appears, however, to have acted without any concert, and the previous question was moved, and carried by sixty-eight to one, the solitary supporter of Dobbs being Newenham.[4]

Lord Corry, the son of Lord Belmore, made another attempt

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 79.

[2] *Faulkner's Journal*, Feb. 28, March 12, 1799.

[3] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 60.

[4] *Faulkner's Journal*, March 7, 1799. The story is told a little differently in Grattan's *Life*, v. 25. The resolutions are, I think, not mentioned in the Government correspondence, and there are scarcely any reports of the debates of this time.

to close the door against the reintroduction of the Union during the existing Parliament. He moved that the House should at once resolve itself into a committee on the state of the nation, and he announced his intention to move an address to the King, declaring an inviolable attachment to the British connection, but representing a separate independent Parliament as essential to the interest and prosperity of Ireland. Lord Castlereagh opposed the motion as unnecessary, declaring that there was no present intention to press the Union. The temper of the House was described by Lord Cornwallis as 'moderate;' several country gentlemen took occasion to state explicitly, that they had every wish to support the Government on all questions except the Union, and some of them added, that even on that question they did not consider themselves irrevocably pledged, if the circumstances of the kingdom should materially alter. The Government defeated Lord Corry's motion by 123 votes against 103, but Lord Cornwallis warned the English Ministers that the debate turned so much on Lord Castlereagh's declaration that the question of the Union was for the present asleep, that they must not infer from the division that the probability of resuming this question with advantage in the present session was in the slightest degree increased.[1]

Another and more important measure of the Opposition was a Regency Bill, intended to supply the omission in the law which had rendered possible the conflict of 1789, and thus to meet one of the most powerful arguments urged against the independent Parliament in Ireland. It was moved by Fitzgerald, the former Prime Sergeant, and it appears to have been debated at great length. The Government disliked it, as destroying part of their case for the Union, but it was difficult to find plausible grounds for opposing it. It asserted in the strongest terms the dependence of the Crown of Ireland on that of England, and the inseparable connection of the two countries; and it proceeded to enact, that the person who was *ipso facto* Regent of England should be always, with the same powers, Regent *de jure* in Ireland. Castlereagh somewhat captiously objected, that the Bill evaded the point of controversy, by not defining the authority by

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 64–66; Coote's *History of the Union*, pp. 191–196; Grattan's *Life*, v. 26.

which the Regent of England was to be made, that it might apply to a person who had usurped the Regency in England on an assumed claim of rights, and that circumstances might arise when it would be expedient that the Regent of Ireland should be under different restrictions from the Regent of England. A few other objections of a very technical kind were suggested, and the Government demanded a distinct and formal recognition of the sole right of the British Parliament to appoint the Regent, and define his powers over the two countries. Fitzgerald replied by inserting in the Bill the words, 'according to the laws and Constitution of Great Britain.' The Bill passed successfully through its earlier stages and through the committee, but in the report Castlereagh moved its rejection, and it was ultimately postponed till the session had closed.[1]

In the discussion upon it, the whole question of the Union appears to have been revived, and Castlereagh on this occasion delivered what was perhaps his ablest speech in favour of that measure. He observed that the Regency Bill, even if it were adequate, could only meet one of the many Imperial questions on which two independent Legislatures in the same Empire were likely to diverge. In questions of peace and war, of general trade and commerce, of treaties with foreign nations, of Admiralty jurisdiction, of the religious establishment—which, he observed, ought to be regulated on Imperial principles—such divergence was always to be feared. 'How was it possible?' he asked, 'to conceive that the Empire could continue as at present, whilst all parts of it were to receive equal protection, and only one part of it is to suffer the burdens of that protection? Must we not of necessity, and in justice, look to some settlement of Imperial contribution? And so soon as a system of contribution should be established, was there any question as to peace and war, which would not agitate every part of the country? . . . Why have we not differed from Great Britain in former wars? It is because Great Britain supported the whole expense. . . . Wars have recently increased in their expense enormously. Ireland as a separate country, possessing all the advantages of the commerce, and all the advantages of the protection of England,

[1] Plowden, ii. 960–962, 967; *Castlereagh Correspondence*, ii. 180, 181, 269, 270; *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 87, 88.

will naturally be bound to contribute her just proportion for the continuance of these advantages. When that shall be the case, how can it be expected that she will tamely follow Great Britain with that submission and subserviency which has hitherto marked her conduct? . . . The feelings of the people must always be agitated in proportion to their interests; they would not easily be reconciled to have their contributions called forth to support measures which their representatives did not discuss. . . . It was against the principle of human nature, that one country should voluntarily and regularly follow the dictates of another; it was against the common principles of pride and independence, which must ever grow and increase with the importance of the kingdom' Hitherto the bond of connection had been the discretion of the Irish Parliament, which had acted with 'prudence, liberality, and loyalty.' But 'in proportion to our wealth and strength, the principle of discretion would be weakened, and the sole security for the continuance of our connection would vanish.'[1]

These considerations had a great and undoubted weight. On the other hand, the Speaker, Foster, availed himself of the Regency debate to reply at length to the speech of Pitt, and to concentrate in a single most able and most elaborate argument the case against the Union. He began by a very full and conclusive argument to prove that, whatever may have been the opinions of individual statesmen, the legislation of 1782 and 1783 had been accepted by the Parliaments of both countries and announced by Ministers of the Crown in England, and by the representatives of the Crown in Ireland, as a 'final adjustment' of the constitutional questions between the two countries, though some questions of commercial relationship remained to be settled. He then proceeded to urge, that the constitutional connection, which was established in 1782 and 1783, was not the frail and precarious thread which Pitt represented. Pitt said that one system of connection had been destroyed, and that no other had been substituted for it; and he described the connection of the two countries as now depending merely on the existence of the King, and on the continued agreement of two entirely

[1] The two speeches of Lord Castlereagh on the Regency Bill have been published separately.

independent Parliaments, exposed to all the attacks of party and all the effects of accident. But in the amended Constitution of Ireland, no Bill could become a law of Ireland which had not been returned from England 'under the great seal of Great Britain,' and the very object of this provision was to prevent the connection from being 'a bare junction of two kingdoms under one Sovereign,' by 'making the British Ministry answerable to the British nation, if any law should receive the royal assent in Ireland which could in any way injure the Empire, or tend to separate Ireland from it.' 'The English Council being responsible for every advice they give their Sovereign,' this provision 'gives to Britain an effectual pledge to retain in her own hands, that it never shall be in our power by any act of ours to weaken or impair the connection.' On the other hand, under the Constitution of 1782, 'Great Britain cannot throw us off. An Act of the British Parliament is inadequate to it. As an instance, no law of hers could repeal our Annexation Act of Henry VIII.'

That a Constitution of this kind, when in the hands of classes who were indisputably loyal, and attached to the connection by the strongest ties of interest, sentiment, and honour, was sufficient to consolidate the Empire, Foster strenuously maintained. It was said, that the Legislature of Ireland might differ from that of Great Britain on questions of peace or war? Had it ever in the long course of centuries done so, though its power to do so had been as unlimited before as after the Constitution of 1782? Had it ever, on any question of peace or war, or treaties, since we have any record of its proceedings, clogged the progress of the Empire? Had it not invariably, but most conspicuously since the recognition of its independence, shown the utmost zeal in supporting Great Britain? The period since 1782 had been peculiarly marked by great and trying events, but it had not produced a single instance of difference on an Imperial question, with the exception of the Regency, and if the Bill before the House were adopted, that difference could never recur.

In theory, no doubt, the two Legislatures might easily clash, just as the British Parliament might at any time disagree with the King in his declaration of peace or war; just as the two Houses of the British Legislature might always, by irreconcilable differences, bring the Government to a dead lock. Good sense

and patriotism and manifest interest maintained in harmony the different parts of the British Constitution, and they would operate equally in preventing collisions between the two Parliaments.

Much use had been made by Pitt of the failure, in the Irish House of Commons, of the altered commercial propositions of 1785, and especially of the very powerful speech in which Foster had defended these propositions. Foster had then said, 'that things could not remain as they were,' that 'without united interest of commerce in a commercial empire, political union will receive many shocks, and separation of interest must threaten separation of connection, which every honest Irishman must shudder to look at.' In reply to this, the House was reminded, in the first place, that the original commercial propositions had been agreed to by the Irish Parliament in a division in which there were no Noes except the tellers', and that it was not the fault of the Irish Parliament if the negotiations for a treaty of commerce were not renewed; and, in the next place, that matters of commerce had in fact not remained as they were. The Irish Parliament had since 1785 passed, with the concurrence or at the suggestion of the Government, a series of Acts for the express purpose of placing the commercial systems of the two countries in harmony, and those measures had been perfectly efficacious. The English Navigation Act had been adopted. The monopoly of the Eastern trade by the East India Company had been confirmed. A number of regulations relating to the registry of shipping, to the increase of shipping, to the lighthouse duties, and to Greenwich Hospital, had been adopted. By the acknowledgment of the representatives of the English Government in Ireland, the commercial systems of the two countries were now working in perfect harmony. England had not a single reason to complain of any act of the Irish Parliament on this subject;[1] and that Parliament was both willing and eager to enter into a compact about the Channel trade. Although the altered treaty of 1785 had been rejected, 'the good sense and mutual interest of each country had from time to time passed all laws necessary to prevent the operation and inconveniences of commercial jealousies.'

[1] See vol. vi. pp. 405, 604.

The true inference, Foster said, which the English Minister should have drawn from the rejection of the propositions of 1785, was very different from that which he had drawn. 'When a suspicion that the operation of them might affect the independence of our Legislature, created such a general disapprobation as obliged him to abandon the measure, he should have learned wisdom thereby, and not have proposed at this day, to a nation so greatly attached to that independence, and the more so for her rising prosperity since its attainment, a measure which does not barely go to alter it, but avowedly and expressly to extinguish it. He should have recollected, that he now offers no one practical or even speculative advantage in commerce when the total extinction is required, and that a measure suspected only to infringe on that independence failed in his hands, though accompanied with offers of solid and substantial benefit to trade.'

It had been said, that the Union with England would tend to tranquillise the country, and to raise the tone of its civilisation. And this, said Foster, is to be the result of 'transporting its Legislature, its men of fortune, and its men of talents'! 'If a resident Parliament and resident gentry cannot soften manners, amend habits, or promote social intercourse, will no Parliament and fewer resident gentry do it?'[1] The greatest misfortune of this kingdom, with respect to the tenantry, is the large class of middlemen who intervene between the owner and the actual occupier, 'and these are mostly to be found on the estates of absentees.' Whatever may be the case in other countries, in Ireland, at least, the example of the upper ranks is the most effectual means of promoting good morals and habits among the lower orders, and there is no country upon earth where the guiding, softening, and restraining influence of a loyal resident gentry, is of more vital importance. If every estate and

[1] Alexander, in writing about this speech, says that Foster adopted Curran's saying, that Government wished to transport the Parliament almost in the same ship as the convicts. (Alexander to Pelham, April 11, 1799.) This argument was put very graphically in one of the speeches of Parsons. 'Suppose any man of plain understanding should meet your peers and your hundred members on the road to London, and ask them, "What are you going there for?" and you should answer, "To preserve the peace of Ireland," would he not say, "Good people, go back to your own country; it is there you can best preserve its peace; England wants you not, but Ireland does"?' (Coote's *History of the Union*, p. 302.)

every village possessed a wise, just, and moderate resident gentleman, the people would soon learn to obey and venerate the law. But the new English policy was to sweep out of the country a great portion of the very class on which its progress in civilisation and loyalty mainly depended; to diminish the power of those who remained, and to throw the country more and more into the hands of landjobbers and agents. Complaints of neglect of duty were often brought against the Church. Was the standard of duty likely to rise, when the bishops were withdrawn from their dioceses for eight months in the year? Was it credible, 'that a Parliament, unacquainted with the local circumstances of a kingdom which it never sees, at too great a distance to receive communication or information for administering in time to the wants and wishes of the people, or to guard against excesses or discontents, can be more capable of acting beneficially than the one which, being on the spot, is acquainted with the habits, prejudices, and dispositions of the people?'

Foster then proceeded to dilate upon the importance of a resident Parliament in repressing disaffection and rebellion. In this, as in every part of his career, he assumed as a fundamental and essential condition of Irish self-government, that the power of Parliament should be retained in the hands of the classes that were unquestionably loyal, and who represented the property of the country; and he maintained that the moral weight, and the strong power of organisation and control, which an Irish Parliament gave them, were of the utmost importance. The volunteer movement was not a movement of disaffection, but there was a moment 'when their great work was effected, and by the indiscreetness of a few leaders their zeal was misled, and they began to exercise the functions of Parliament. We spoke out firmly. They heard our voice with effect, and took our advice in instantly returning to cultivate the blessings of peace. . . . Personal character, respect to individuals, opinion of their attachment to one common country, all impressed an awe which was irresistible. . . . Would equal firmness in a Parliament composed five parts in six of strangers, sitting in another country, have had the same effect?'

Then came the great rebellion which had so lately desolated the country. Could a Parliament sitting in another land grapple

with such a danger, like a loyal Parliament sitting in Dublin? Would it have the same knowledge of the conditions of the problem, or the same moral weight with the people, or the same promptitude in applying stern and drastic remedies? He reminded the members of the day when they had gone in solemn procession to the Castle to present their address of loyalty, and of the outburst of enthusiasm which their attitude had aroused. 'It animated the loyal spirit which crushed the rebellion before a single soldier could arrive from England.' Could any procession of a United Parliament through St. James's Park have had a similar moral effect in Ireland? 'The extraordinary, but wise and necessary measure, of proclaiming martial law, required the concurrence of Parliament to support the Executive. The time would have passed by before that concurrence could have been asked for and received from London, and it would have given a faint support coming from strangers.' No one had acknowledged more emphatically than Lord Camden, how largely the 'peculiar promptitude, alacrity, and unanimity' of the Irish House of Commons had contributed to crush the rebellion, and to save the State, and to place it in a condition to encounter a foreign as well as a domestic enemy.

The removal of the loyal Parliament which so effectually suppressed the rebellion, would undoubtedly give a new encouragement to disaffection. It would also almost certainly lead to an era of greatly increased taxation. One of the capital advantages of Ireland during the eighteenth century was, that it was one of the most lightly taxed countries in Europe. The speech of Lord Castlereagh clearly foreshadowed that this was now to change, and that a desire to make Ireland contribute in an increased proportion to the expenses of the Empire, was one of the chief motives to the Union. 'He wants an Union in order to tax you, and take your money, when he fears your own representatives would deem it improper, and to force regulations on your trade which your own Parliament would consider injurious or partial.'

This was but a part of the probable effect of the Union on the material prosperity of Ireland, and Foster examined this subject with a fullness of detail and illustration to which it is wholly impossible in a brief sketch to do adequate justice. He

dwelt in strong terms, but not in stronger ones than Clare and Cooke had already used,[1], or than Castlereagh afterwards employed,[2] on the great and manifest progress in material prosperity that had accompanied the latter days of the Irish Parliament. It had been its work 'to raise this kingdom into prosperity, and keep it in a steady and rapid advance, even beyond the utmost hopes of its warmest advocates.' He quoted the recent language of Parliament itself, declaring in an address to Lord Cornwallis, 'that under his Majesty's benevolent auspices his kingdom of Ireland had risen to a height of prosperity unhoped for and unparalleled in any former era;' and he proceeded to argue, with great ingenuity and knowledge, that the latter progress of Ireland with her separate Parliament had been more rapid than that of Scotland under the Union. And this progress was chiefly accomplished under the Constitution of 1782. 'It has not only secured, but absolutely showered down upon you more blessings, more trade, more affluence, than ever fell to your lot in double the space of time which has elapsed since its attainment.' 'The general export rose in seventy-eight years to 1782 from one to five, and in fourteen years after 1782 from five to ten. The linen export in the seventy-eight years rose from one to thirty-two, and in the last fourteen years from thirty-two to eighty-eight, so that the general export rose as much in the last fourteen years as it had done not only during the preceding seventy-eight years, but during all time preceding; and the linen increased in the last fourteen years very nearly to treble the amount of what it had been before.' He inferred from this, that the condition of Ireland was essentially sound, that if she were only wise enough to abstain from experiment, industry and wealth must increase, and civilisation and meliorated manners must follow in their train.

It was said that this material progress was either not due to political causes, or not due to the action of the Irish Parliament. That political causes had largely produced the depression that preceded it, Foster said, no one at least could doubt. No United Irishman indeed had ever described more severely the

[1] See vol. vi. p. 438.

[2] In an Irish debate in 1803, Castlereagh said, 'No Power in Europe had made more rapid strides in wealth and general happiness in the last fifteen years, than that part of the British Empire [Ireland] had done.' (*Parl. History*, xxxvi. 1709.)

character and the effects of English commercial policy in Ireland, than William Pitt in his speeches on the commercial propositions of 1785. 'Until these very few years,' he had said, 'the system had been that of debarring Ireland from the enjoyment and use of her own resources, to make the kingdom completely subservient to the interests and opulence of this country, without suffering her to share in the bounties of nature and the industry of her citizens,' for Great Britain till very recently had 'never looked upon her growth and prosperity as the growth and prosperity of the Empire at large.' By simply repealing its own restricting laws, the English Parliament had no doubt given a great impulse to Irish progress, but the more liberal policy of the English Parliament was largely due to the vigour which the Octennial Act had infused into the Parliament of Ireland. And in other ways the action of that Parliament had been more direct. It gave the export bounties, which placed our linen trade on an equal footing with the British, 'whereas till then our linen was exported from Britain . . . under a disadvantage of $5\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.' It supported powerfully and efficaciously the demands of the Executive on Portugal for the full participation of Ireland in the Methuen treaty. During forty years the victualling trade of Ireland had been harassed and restricted by twenty-four embargoes, one of which lasted three years, until 'Parliament took up the subject. The embargo ceased, and none has appeared to oppress you from that day.'[1] And finally it was Parliament which, by the bounties on corn, gave the first great impulse to Irish agriculture. All this was due to the Constitution of 1782, which 'gave freedom to our Parliament, and with it the power of protection.' Could the commercial interests of the country be equally trusted to a Parliament which was dependent, or to a Parliament in which the Irish members were hopelessly outnumbered?

It might be said, that 'you would depend on the articles you may frame, to secure your trade and your purse.' It was answered, that the very doctrine of the omnipotence of Parliament, which was now so constantly urged, and which was necessary to justify the Union, reduced its articles to mere waste

[1] A remarkable paper on the effect of some of these embargoes on Irish prosperity, was drawn up by Foster's predecessor in the chair, Edmund Pery, and sent to England. See Grattan's *Life*, i. 334–338.

paper. The United Parliament will have the power to alter or abrogate any article of the Union which it pleases, to abolish bounties, to amalgamate debts, or to raise the level of taxation as it desires, and a minority of a hundred Irish members will have no power to stay its decision.

Foster then proceeded at great length, and with great amplitude of illustration, to examine in succession the different industries that would be affected by the measure. The growth of English manufactures in Ireland, as a result of the Union, he believed to be wholly chimerical. He argued in much detail that neither the woollen, nor the iron, nor the cotton, nor the pottery manufactures of England, were likely to take any considerable root in Ireland, and he especially combated the prediction, which had much influence in Munster, that Cork would rise after the Union to unprecedented prosperity. He proceeded then to consider the contention of Pitt, that the Irish linen manufacture was wholly dependent on the encouragement of Great Britain, and that it was the policy of England, and not anything done by the Irish Parliament, that had produced the great and undoubted commercial prosperity of the last few years. This line of argument Foster very strongly deprecated. The two countries, he said, were so closely connected, that each could greatly assist or greatly injure the other, and nothing could be more detrimental to a true Union than to sow between them, by idle boasts or threats, a spirit of commercial jealousy or distrust. Ireland owed very much to England, but the benefit was reciprocal, for it was proved by official statistics, that in 1797 the export of English manufactures to Ireland alone was more than one-third of the value of the export of those manufactures to all the rest of Europe. Was it likely that Great Britain would quarrel with such a customer? Independently of the historical fact that the encouragement of the linen trade was intended as a compensation for the iniquitous suppression of the Irish wool trade, it was not true that Irish linen depended on English bounties and encouragement. At the time when he spoke, the linen trade was in a state of extraordinary prosperity. Irish linens had very recently risen thirty-five per cent. above their usual value, 'and yet the British merchants are so anxious to purchase them, that they are even securing them on the greens

before they can go to market.' 'Irish linens do not monopolise the British market by means of the duty [on foreign linen], and could at present find their way there, even if there was no duty on the foreign.' 'In no place are we protected against German linen except in Britain, and yet ours is finding its way almost everywhere.' 'Our linens beat the German and the Russian in the American markets. They are preferred even to the Scotch, and no nation can bring the fabric to the perfection we do, not so much perhaps from superior skill, as from the peculiar fitness of our climate for bleaching.'

Such a trade could certainly exist and flourish without the support of Great Britain. That England by a protective policy directed against Ireland, could inflict much injury on her, was no doubt true, but those who rashly counselled such a policy should learn to dread the consequences of changing the course of manufacture by forced measures, and should remember that four and a half millions of people will not remain idle. 'England raised the woollen manufactory here by prohibiting the importation of Irish provisions, and she established the woollen manufactory afterwards in France by destroying the child of her own creation in Ireland. Should she attempt and prevail in prohibiting our linen to her ports, it is impossible to foresee what ports we may find, what returns we may get, and in those how much of what she now supplies us with, may be included.'

These words came with an especial weight from a statesman, who was the acknowledged master of all questions relating to the commercial condition of Ireland—a statesman whose life had been largely spent in harmonising the commercial systems of the two countries. Nor was there less weight in the language in which he dwelt upon the extreme danger of persisting in such a measure as the Union, in opposition to the genuine sentiment of the intelligent portion of the nation. 'Let the silly attempt,' he said, 'to encourage its revival by getting resolutions privately signde for it, be abandoned. If you doubt the general execration in which it is held, call the counties. Take their sense at public meetings, instead of preventing those meetings lest the general sense should be known, and put an end to all the idle and silly tricks of circulating stories, that this gentleman or that gentleman has changed his mind.' 'The Union of Scotland was re-

commended to prevent separation—we oppose the proposed Union from the same motive.'

A mere sketch, such as I have given, can do little justice to a speech which took more than four hours in its delivery, and was afterwards published in a pamphlet of no less than 113 closely printed pages. It should be compared with the great speech of Pitt, which it was intended to answer, and it will not suffer by the comparison. It had a wide and serious influence on opinion, not only from its great intrinsic merits, but also from the high character and position of its author; from his evident disinterestedness; and from the confidential place he had for so many years held in the Government of the country.

There were but few other proceedings in the Parliament of 1799 that need delay our attention. The Indemnity Act, and the proceedings of the High Sheriff of Tipperary, which chiefly produced it, have been elsewhere considered. The Act was warmly recommended by Lord Castlereagh, and there is, I believe, no evidence that he seriously disapproved of the conduct of Fitzgerald.[1] A very remarkable and somewhat obscure episode, however, took place about this time in the House of Lords, which deserves some notice.

We have seen that the College of Maynooth, though built by a parliamentary grant, had not at first any fixed or recognised endowment from the State. The grant, however, of 8,000*l.*, which had been voted in 1795, was followed in the three next years by additional grants amounting together to 27,000*l.*[2] But in 1799, in consequence of negotiations entered into with Archbishop Troy, and some other leading members of the Catholic body, the Government determined to place the college on a firmer basis, by providing it with a permanent annual endowment of 8,000*l.*, which was to be devoted to the purpose of educating 200 students.[3] The measure, like most others at this time, was in reality taken mainly for the sake of winning support for the Union,[4] and the Government do not appear to have anticipated any

[1] See *Castlereagh Correspondence*, ii. 280–282.

[2] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 371, 372.

[3] Ibid. iii. 91, 372.

[4] Lord Castlereagh says, 'When the grant to the Catholic College was made for the year 1799 in the Irish Parliament, it was much more intent on the question of the Union than on the internal economy of that seminary.' (*Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 374.)

serious resistance, or to have encountered any in the Commons; but when the Bill came before the Peers, it met with a most unexpected fate. Lord Clare, without having given the smallest hint of his intention either to Cornwallis or to Castlereagh, rose to oppose it. He appears from the beginning to have detested the institution, and he now maintained that its evils could only be palliated by introducing into the seminary a lay element of sons of Catholic gentry, who might liberalise the sacerdotal students by their contact and manners, and also by insisting on the students paying at least a portion of the expense of their education. Maynooth, he complained, was a purely sacerdotal institution; the education was gratuitous; the future priesthood of Ireland would in consequence be drawn from the dregs of the population, and he spoke in terms of bitter invective of the recent conduct of the Catholic clergy in dividing as much as possible the Catholics from the Protestants. In the House of Lords, the Chancellor was almost omnipotent, and on his motion the proposal that the Bill should go into committee was rejected by twenty-five to one.

This was a complete and most unwelcome surprise to the Government, and it threatened very seriously to disturb their negotiations with the Catholics. The belief was soon widely spread that it was intended to abolish Maynooth, but Castlereagh at once disavowed any such intention, and in the following year a grant, which the Government desired, was duly voted with a Bill slightly altering the administration of the College, and Clare took a leading part in supporting it. The cause of his very extraordinary conduct in 1799 must be a matter of conjecture. He himself wrote to Lord Castlereagh, that he was convinced that if Maynooth on its existing lines received a permanent legislative sanction, it would enable the popish prelates of Ireland to subvert its Government in ten years.[1] It appears, however, to have been believed by many that other motives influenced his decision.[2] Perhaps the most probable was a desire

[1] Compare the statements of Cornwallis, Clare, and Castlereagh in the *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 90–92, 371–375; *Castlereagh Correspondence*, iii. 277–279.

[2] Sir Robert Peel, many years later, wrote to Croker, 'As to your second point, the rejection of the Bill in 1799, I believe at this moment no human being but myself knows the real truth on that point. It was an act of sheer mischief and mutiny of Lord Clare, who, perhaps, then had a foresight of diminished influence on

to show the Government that if they tried to carry the Union by making concessions to the Catholics, and sacrificing the party of the ascendency, they might encounter a most formidable and uncompromising opposition.

It is certain, however, that the attitude of the Catholic priesthood in Ireland, had at this time created a very real and widespread anxiety and irritation among men who were neither Orangemen nor sympathisers with Orangemen, and that these feelings were not solely or even mainly due to the part taken by some priests in the rebellion. The great clerical reaction throughout Europe, which followed the French Revolution, might be already discerned in Ireland in an increased stringency of ecclesiastical discipline, which was directly calculated to deepen the divisions of Irish life. Much irritation had been created on the eve of the rebellion by a pastoral of Dr. Hussey, commenting on some cases in which Catholic soldiers are stated to have been obliged to attend Protestant worship. The grievance appears to have been a real one,[1] but it was said that the time and manner in which it was denounced were eminently fitted to sow the seeds of disaffection and division in the army.

More serious complaints were made, that the priests were forcing Catholic parents, by threats of excommunication and deprivation of all the benefits and blessings of the Church, to withdraw their children from Protestant schools. It was obviously intended, it was said, to bring into the hands of the priests the education of all the lower orders throughout the kingdom, and the worst enemy of Ireland could not devise a more effectual scheme for keeping the Irish Catholics a distinct people, main-

the passing of the Act of Union. He rejected the Bill without communication with the Irish Government. Lord Castlereagh gave an assurance in the Commons, as you will perceive, that no prejudice to the College should arise from the proceedings in the Lords.' (*Croker Correspondence*, 2nd ed. iii. 33.) In 1801, Clare, contrary to the wish of the other members of the Government, tried to procure the admission of lay students into Maynooth, and there was a somewhat angry dispute. Lord Hardwicke wrote: 'Whether Lord Clare has taken the part he has from spleen or dislike to the Government, or from a conviction that it was right to do so, I cannot pretend to determine. . . . It would be very curious if, after all that has passed, Lord Clare should be attempting to acquire popularity with the Catholics at the expense of the Government. He seems to me, with a great share of cleverness and vivacity, to be very deficient in consistency and precision in his ideas.' (*Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 367, 368.)

[1] See on this subject the *Substance of the Speech of Sir J. Hippisley*, May 18, 1810, pp. 50–52.

taining eternal enmity and hatred between them and the Protestant body, and counteracting that liberal intercourse which tolerant laws and tolerant manners had of late years established between them. 'This,' it was added, 'was precisely the same tyranny of which the Catholics had themselves so long complained, as violating the first principles of nature, by denying the parent the right of educating his children as seemed best to himself,' and the priests were far more inexorable in enforcing the spiritual penalties, than the Legislature had ever been in enforcing temporal ones. In the late rebellion there had been alarming signs that when fanaticism was aroused, Catholic servants in Protestant houses could not be trusted, and that they looked upon their masters as aliens and reprobates. Few things, it was said, had done so much to produce this feeling as the inexorable refusal of absolution and the sacraments, by which the priests now punished any Catholic servant who attended the family prayers of his Protestant master, even when it was perfectly notorious that those prayers contained nothing in the smallest degree hostile to the Catholic faith. In the English Church the power of excommunication had long been disused; and even when it was employed, it was exercised only under the strict superintendence of the ecclesiastical courts. In Ireland it was lavishly employed, and it was made the instrument of atrocious tyranny. It was especially made use of to punish all Roman Catholics who entered a Protestant church, assisted at a Protestant sermon, or received any kind of moral or religious instruction from a Protestant minister. 'The excommunicated person,' wrote a Protestant bishop of very moderate opinions, 'is driven from society; no one converses with him; no one serves, no one employs him.' The Bishop mentions one case, which had come under his personal notice, of a Catholic who in his family read the English Bible, and who sometimes went to hear a sermon in a Protestant church. He was publicly excommunicated, and the immediate consequence was, that he lost all his business as house-painter, and was reduced to poverty. He was often advised to bring an action for damages against the priest, but he knew that his life would be in imminent danger if he did so, and he was at last obliged to fly from the country.

It appeared to many Protestants, that a tyranny not less

crushing or degrading than the old penal laws was growing up in Ireland, and that it might one day become a grave danger to the State. It was represented that with the home education of the priests, their numbers would certainly increase; that the bishops, not content with Maynooth, were establishing seminaries for priests in almost every diocese; that in the government of Maynooth the Protestant element was little more than formal, and had no real power.[1] A numerous priesthood, drawn chiefly from the peasant class; educated on a separate and monastic system; uncontrolled and unendowed by the State, and exercising an enormous influence over an ignorant and disaffected people, might hereafter play a formidable part in Irish politics. The attitude of the House of Lords in 1799 may have been largely influenced by such fears.

The other incident which must be noticed in this session, was of a very different kind. Colonel Cole, one of the members for Enniskillen, who was an opponent of the Union, had been ordered to join his regiment in Malta; he accordingly desired, in the usual way, to vacate his seat, and it was known that a prominent anti-Unionist would take his place. Seats in the Irish Parliament were vacated by the grant of a nominal office called the Escheatorship of Munster, which corresponded to the Chiltern Hundreds in England. In both countries the office was granted as a matter of course, though a single case was discovered in Ireland in which it had been refused. It was the main object, however, of the Government to pack the Parliament with supporters of the Union, and accordingly Cornwallis, who granted the Escheatorship invariably, and without question, in all cases in which an Unionist was likely to be returned, took the extraordinary course of refusing it to Colonel Cole, and to another member whose seat would be filled by an anti-Unionist. His act was defended on the ground that the bestowal of Crown offices was within the sole and unquestioned prerogative of the Crown; but an Opposition powerful in talent and character maintained, that such an exercise of the prerogative was a gross abuse, and a glaring violation of the spirit of the Constitution.

[1] See a very remarkable letter from the Bishop of Meath to Lord Castlereagh, *Castlereagh Correspondence*, ii. 282–291. The Bishop was strongly in favour of Maynooth, and does not appear to have approved of the act of the House of Lords in rejecting the vote.

The independent element in the House appears to have been strongly with them, and an address, requesting the Crown to grant a pension to Colonel Cole, which, by disqualifying him from sitting in the House, would vacate his seat, was moved by John Claudius Beresford. The Government succeeded in defeating it by a motion for adjournment, but their majority was only fifteen, and the Duke of Portland intimated that for the future it would be better to follow the rule adopted in England.[1]

The conduct of the Government in this matter clearly showed their determination at all hazards to persevere. In April an address in favour of the Union passed through both of the British Houses of Parliament almost without opposition, after debates which added little to the weight of argument, but much to the weight of authority in its favour. The remarkable concurrence of opinion among those who had been personally responsible for the administration of Ireland, that a speedy Union was essential to the security and continuance of the connection, is the strongest argument in favour of the Government. In the English debates in this and the succeeding year, Carlisle, Westmorland, Portland, Camden, and Buckingham, who had all been Lords Lieutenant, and Hobart, Auckland, and Douglass, who had all been Chief Secretaries, spoke strongly in favour of an Union. Lord Fitzwilliam, however, and General Fitzpatrick, who had been Chief Secretary in the Administration of Portland, took the other side, the first dwelling chiefly on the inopportuneness of the moment for introducing so extensive a change, and the second maintaining the acknowledged finality of the constitutional compact of 1782.

Very few of the seceding Whigs thought it necessary to be present during these debates, and only three somewhat obscure peers signed the protest against the address. Lord Moira in one House, and Sir Francis Burdett in the other, denounced the whole recent Irish policy of the Government with great violence, and the former declared that the Union in Ireland was viewed 'by the nation at large, with an abhorrence amounting almost to a degree of frenzy.' A more temperate, and therefore a more impressive speech, was made by Lord Darnley, who was a great Irish proprietor. He believed that a legislative Union between

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 97–100; Grattan's *Life*, v. 40–46.

the two countries was in itself desirable; but he warned the Ministers that they most seriously underrated the opposition to it in Ireland. 'Englishmen,' he said, 'are disposed to measure everything by the standard of their own country, than which nothing can be more fallacious when applied to Ireland. I really believe that, in many respects, the inhabitants of no two countries on the face of the globe are so essentially different.' English Ministers, he continued, were entirely mistaken in supposing that the opposition to the Union in Ireland represented merely a faction or a cabal. 'Unless I am very much deceived, it speaks almost the united sense of the whole Irish nation—not indeed of the whole nation taken numerically, for unfortunately the majority of the population of Ireland is incapable of forming any adequate judgment on this or any other subject; and if they were, their minds are so tainted with the poison of French principles . . . that their opinion would be of but little value as applied to the question. I speak not therefore of them, but of the middle ranks of every description throughout the country, the country gentlemen, the yeomen, the merchants and manufacturers, the learned bodies . . . the strength and sinew of the country, the zealous friends of British connection . . . these, I fear, are your opponents. . . . Nothing which I have seen or heard, induces me to believe that this most respectable and important part of the Irish nation is not decidedly hostile to every idea of Union.'[1]

Very little was said in reply to these representations, but one speaker dilated on the many signs of unpopularity that had attended and followed the Scotch Union, and had not prevented that act from being a signal blessing to both countries. The addresses, however, of the two English Houses of Parliament in favour of the Union had a considerable moral effect, and the speech of the Lord Lieutenant, in closing the session of the Irish Parliament on June 1, clearly evinced the determination of the Government to push on the measure. The fact that the Irish House of Commons had emphatically condemned it in its very first stage was not even referred to, but the Lord Lieutenant stated that he had received his Majesty's particular commands to acquaint them with the addresses and resolutions of the two

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxxiv. 688–690.

Houses in England. He added, that the King would receive the greatest satisfaction in witnessing the accomplishment of the Union, and that for his own part, if he were able 'to contribute in the smallest degree to the success of this great measure,' he would consider the labours and anxieties of a life devoted to the public service, amply repaid.[1]

In addition to the Union, there were two other measures which the English Government was extremely anxious to carry. One of them was the imposition of an income tax on Ireland, like that of England. The other was a law similar to one which had just passed in England, enabling the King to take 10,000 men out of the Irish militia for the purpose of foreign service.[2] Castlereagh and Cornwallis warned them that it would be most dangerous to connect these measures with the Union, and the latter measure appeared to the Lord Lieutenant in the existing condition of Ireland altogether unsafe. It was, at one time, in contemplation to summon Parliament for an October session, for the purpose of imposing an income tax prior to an Union,[3] but this intention was ultimately abandoned. It was perceived that it would interrupt the measures which the Government were taking to create a parliamentary majority for the Union, and to this great end all their efforts and policies were now subordinated. Seven months and a half were accordingly allowed to pass before Parliament was again summoned, and in this interval the task of securing a majority was accomplished.

[1] Seward's *Collectanea Politica*, iii. 488–490.

[2] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, ii. 250, 251; *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 133.

[3] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, ii. 271, 272.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE UNION.

PART II.

THE kind of negotiation into which Lord Cornwallis was at this time compelled to enter, was in the highest degree distasteful to his frank, honourable, soldier-like character, and his correspondence shows that he was under no illusion about the nature of his task, or about the real motives, opinions, and dispositions of his supporters. 'The political jobbing of this country,' he writes, 'gets the better of me. It has ever been the wish of my life to avoid this dirty business, and I am now involved in it beyond all bearing. . . . How I long to kick those whom my public duty obliges me to court!' 'My occupation is now of the most unpleasant nature, negotiating and jobbing with the most corrupt people under heaven. I despise and hate myself every hour, for engaging in such dirty work, and am supported only by the reflection, that without an Union the British Empire must be dissolved.' He recalled, as applicable to himself, the bitter lines in which Swift had painted the demon Viceroy, scattering in corruption the contributions of the damned, and then complaining that his budget was too small;[1] and he repeated once more, 'Nothing but the conviction that an Union is absolutely necessary for the safety of the British Empire, could make me endure the

[1] So, to effect his monarch's ends,
From Hell a Viceroy devil ascends,
His budget with corruptions cramm'd,
The contributions of the damned;
Which with unsparing hand he strows,
Through courts and senates as he goes;
And then at Beelzebub's black hall,
Complains his budget is too small.
A Libel on the Rev. Dr. Delany and his Excellency Lord Carteret.

shocking task which is imposed on me.' That the majority which ultimately carried the Union, was not an honest majority expressing honest opinions, he most clearly saw. 'The nearer the great event approaches,' he wrote almost at the last stage of the discussion, 'the more are the needy and interested senators alarmed at the effects it may possibly have on their interests and the provision for their families, and I believe that *half of our majority* would be at least as much delighted as any of our opponents, if the measure could be defeated.'[1]

In the face of such declarations, it appears to me idle to dispute the essentially corrupt character of the means by which the Union was carried, though it may be truly said that selfish motives, and even positive corruption, were by no means a monopoly of its supporters, and though there may be some difference of opinion about the necessity of the case, and some reasonable doubt about the particular forms of bribery that were employed. The most serious feature in the parliamentary debates of 1799, was the strenuous opposition to the measure by the county members, who represented the great majority of the free constituencies of Ireland, who on all normal occasions supported the Government, and who in many instances, while opposing the Union, disclaimed in the most emphatic terms any intention of going into systematic opposition. Lord Castlereagh, as I have said, attributed their attitude largely to the first intention of the Government to diminish by a half the county representation, and he hoped that the retention of the whole of that representation in his amended scheme, and the greatly enhanced dignity attaching to a seat in the Imperial Parliament, would put an end to their opposition. But in this expectation he was deceived. Though some conspicuous county members supported the Union, the large majority, as we shall see, remained to the end its opponents.

The main power in Parliament, however, rested with the great borough owners, and so many seats were in the hands of a few men, that the task of the Government was not a very formidable one. In truth, when we consider the enormous and overwhelming majorities the Government could on all ordinary occasions command, and the utter insignificance of the Opposition,

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 100–102, 228.

especially after the secession of Grattan and the outbreak of the rebellion, the difficulty they encountered is more wonderful than their success. A few of the borough seats were attached to bishoprics, and were completely at their disposal. Others were in the hands of great English absentees. Most of them were in the control of men who held lucrative offices in the Government, or who had within the last few years been either ennobled, or promoted in the peerage as a price of their political support. Lord Shannon, who had long been the most powerful of the borough owners, had from the beginning supported them; Lord Waterford, Lord Ormond, Lord Clifden, Lord Longueville, and other peers with great influence in the House of Commons, were on the same side. In the constitution of the Irish Parliament, the purchase of a few men was sufficient to turn the scale and to secure a majority, and this purchase was now speedily and simply effected by promises of peerages.

Immediately after the Union had passed through the Irish House of Commons, but before it had received the royal assent, Lord Cornwallis sent over a list of sixteen new peerages, which had been promised on account of valuable services that had been rendered in carrying it. It appears from the correspondence that ensued, that the King and the English Government, though they had given a general authority to Cornwallis, had not been consulted in the details of the promotions, and they were anxious to strike out a few names and adjourn the creations till after the first election of representative peers for the Imperial Parliament.[1] Cornwallis and Castlereagh both declared that this course would involve a breach of faith which would make it impossible for them to continue in the Government of Ireland, and a few sentences from the letters of Castlereagh will throw a clear light on the nature of the transaction. 'It appears to me,' he wrote, 'that Lord Cornwallis, having been directed to undertake and carry the measure of Union, and having been fully authorised by various despatches to make arrangements with individuals to which not only the faith of his own, but of the English Government, was understood to be pledged, will be very harshly treated if the wisdom of his arrangements, now the measure is secured, is to be canvassed. . . . I am fully aware of the responsibility to

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 251–256.

which the Irish Government has been subjected, in the exercise of the authority which I conceive to have been delegated to them at the outset of this measure. The importance of the object could have alone induced the King's Ministers to grant such powers, and I hope they will now, in deciding what remains to be done, advert to the nature of the struggle, as well as the authority which the Irish Government conceived itself in the possession of. . . . It certainly has been exercised successfully as far as the object is concerned, and not for any purposes personal either to Lord Cornwallis or myself. . . . In so long a struggle, in a certain period of which, after the defection of seven members in one division, the fate of the measure was in suspense, it is not wonderful that the scale of favours should have been somewhat deranged; if in two or three instances, and I do not believe it will appear in more, certain individuals, availing themselves of circumstances, obtained assurances of favours to which in strictness they are not entitled.' 'It appears that the Cabinet, after having carried the measure by the force of influence of which they were apprised in every despatch sent from hence for the last eighteen months, wish to forget all this; they turn short round, and say it would be a pity to tarnish all that has been so well done by giving any such shock to the public sentiment. If they imagine they can take up popular grounds by disappointing their supporters, and by disgracing the Irish Government, I think they will find themselves mistaken. It will be no secret what has been promised, and by what means the Union has been secured. . . . The only effect of such a proceeding on their part, will be to add the weight of their testimony to that of the anti-Unionists in proclaiming the profligacy of the means by which the measure has been accomplished. . . . The new peerages . . . are all granted either to persons actually members of, or connected with, the House of Commons.'[1]

The sixteen peerages, however, referred to in these letters, by

[1] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, iii. 327, 328, 330, 331. Lord Cornwallis writes, 'He [the King] will, I am persuaded, see the necessity of my having entered into embarrassing engagements, according to the various circumstances which occurred during the long and arduous contest, and if any of them should appear so strongly to merit his disapprobation, as to induce him to withhold his consent to their being carried into effect, he will be pleased to allow me to retire from a station which I could no longer hold with honour to myself, or with any prospect of advantage to his service.' (*Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 265, 266.)

no means comprise the whole of what in this department was done. In the short viceroyalty of Lord Cornwallis, no less than twenty-eight Irish peerages were created, six Irish peers obtained English peerages on account of Irish services, and twenty Irish peers obtained a higher rank in the peerage.[1]

There was another form of bribe, which had probably not less influence. If the Union was carried, a new object of ambition of the first magnitude would be at once opened to the Irish peerage. No promotion in that peerage was likely to be so much coveted as the position of representative peer, which was to be enjoyed by twenty-eight members of the Irish peerage, and was to place them for life in the Imperial House of Lords. But the influence the Government exercised in the peerage was so great, that it was easy to foresee that, in the first election at least, it would prove absolutely decisive. The first representative peers, indeed, were virtually nominated by the Lord Lieutenant, and they consisted exclusively of supporters of the Union.[2]

It was essentially by these means that the Union was carried, though there are some slight qualifications to be made. In the long list of creations and promotions, there are nine which were not connected with the Union, and among the new peers there were doubtless a few who claimed and received rewards for acting in accordance with their genuine convictions. Lord Clare, the great father of the Union, was made an English peer in September 1799.[3] Lord Altamount had from the first declared himself in its favour, and the tone of his whole correspondence with the Government indicates a man of real public spirit, yet he bargained for and obtained a marquisate. Lord Kenmare was the leading member of a small group of Catholic gentlemen

[1] See the list in *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 318, 319. Very full details about the services of the new peers will be found in earlier letters (iii. 251–266).

[2] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 286, 287.

[3] Lord Clare's English peerage was first suggested from England as early as June. Portland writes, 'The sense we have of Lord Clare's services, and of the manly and decided part he has acted, as well with respect to the Union as upon all other occasions,' induces the Ministers to recommend him for an English peerage, 'without waiting, as was originally intended, until the measure of the Union was secured and completed.' He believed, he said, that such a step might clearly evince H.M.'s determination, and the rewards likely to be obtained by supporting the Union. (Portland to Cornwallis, June 28, 1799.)

who had long been in the close confidence of the Government, and who undoubtedly desired the Union, yet the earldom of Lord Kenmare was described by Lord Cornwallis as one of the titles which he was 'obliged' to promise in order to carry it.[1] Men, it is true, who valued honour more than honours, and who, in a period of extreme corruption, believed it to be their duty to take the invidious course of voting for the extinction of the Legislature of their country, would not have acted in this manner. They would rather have followed the example of Lord Gosford, who warmly supported the Union, but at the same time refused an earldom, in order that no imputation should rest upon the integrity of his motives.[2] But the Irish borough owners should be judged by no high standard, and it may be admitted, to their faint credit, that in some few instances their peerages did not determine their votes and their influence. In the majority of cases, however, these peerages were simple, palpable, open bribes, intended for no other purpose than to secure a majority in the House of Commons. The most important of the converts was Lord Ely, whose decision, after many fluctuations, appears to have been finally fixed by a letter from Pitt himself. He obtained a promise of an English peerage, and a well-founded expectation of a marquisate, and he brought to the Government at least eight borough seats, and also a vast amount of county influence which was very useful in procuring addresses in favour of the Union.[3]

[1] 'Among the many engagements which I have been obliged to contract in the event of the success of the measure of a legislative Union, I have promised to use my utmost influence to obtain an earldom for Lord Kenmare.' (*Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 109.)

[2] *Cornwallis' Correspondence*, iii. 319. Bishop Percy notices that Lord Gosford's wife was very hostile to the Union, and that their son voted against it in the House of Commons. (Jan. 30, 1800.)

[3] On Dec. 11, 1799, Castlereagh wrote to Portland, 'Mr. Pitt's letter, which your Grace was so obliging as to obtain for me, enabled me perfectly to satisfy Lord Ely, without making any positive promise as to the marquisate. His Lordship is satisfied to leave himself in the hands of the Government.' (*Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 149.) The King was very anxious to restrict the number of marquisates and English peerages, and in 1800 the Duke of Portland wrote to the Lord Lieutenant, that he must do his best to confine the English peerages to the Earls of Ely and Londonderry, and to persuade the peers whom the Lord Lieutenant had recommended for marquisates, with the exception of Lord Clanricarde, to surrender their claims as a special favour to the King. If absolutely necessary, however, an exception might be made for Lord Ely, as his influence had proved so great. Cornwallis answered, 'Lord Ely, who never willingly relinquished anything, has a promise of being made a marquis,

But although the weight of such a mass of creations and promotions must have been enormous in a Parliament constituted like that of Ireland, it would have been insufficient but for some supplementary measures. The first was, a provision that close boroughs should be treated as private property, and that the patrons should receive a liberal pecuniary compensation for their loss. This compensation removed an obstacle which must have been fatal to the Union, but being granted to opponents as well as supporters, it cannot, in my opinion, be justly regarded as strictly bribery, and it may be defended by serious arguments. Nomination boroughs were in fact, though not in law, undoubtedly private property, and the sale or purchase of seats was a perfectly open transaction, fully recognised by public opinion, and practised by honourable politicians. As we have already seen, Pitt, in his English Reform Bill of 1785, proposed to create a fund for the purchase of the English boroughs, and the United Irishmen included the compensation of Irish borough owners in their scheme of radical reform. The English Legislature always refused to recognise this traffic, but it does not appear to have been formally prohibited or made subject to legal penalties until 1809;[1] and even in 1832, Lord Eldon maintained that proprietary boroughs were strictly property. 'Borough property,' he said, 'was a species of property which had been known in this country for centuries; it had been over and over again made the subject of purchase and sale in all parts of the kingdom, and they might as well extinguish the right of private individuals to their advowsons, as their right to exercise the privileges which they derived from the possession of burgage tenures;' and he quoted the course which was taken when abolishing the hereditable jurisdictions in Scotland, and

which, I understood from Lord Castlereagh, was authorised from England in a letter written by Mr. Pitt, and transmitted by your Grace to him.' (Ibid. pp. 258, 262, 264.) Many other particulars about Lord Ely will be found in this correspondence. He was compensated for six seats, but he retained what was then the close borough of Wexford in the Imperial Parliament; he had considerable county influence, and he appears to have bought nominations from other borough owners. (Ibid. p. 324.) Cornwallis notices the importance of Lord Ely's influence, in procuring addresses for the Union from the counties where his property lay. (P. 113.)

[1] Ball's *Irish Legislative Systems*, 2nd ed. p. 285; May's *Const. Hist.* i. 292, 293.

the nomination boroughs in Ireland, as binding precedents.[1] This view was not adopted by the Imperial Legislature, and an overwhelming wave of popular enthusiasm, which brought England almost to the verge of revolution, enabled the Whig Ministry to sweep away the small boroughs, and carry the Reform Bill of 1832. But in Ireland at the time of the Union there was certainly no such enthusiasm; the borough interest was stronger than in England, and it was idle to expect that those who possessed it would make this great pecuniary sacrifice without compensation. The opponents of the Union dilated with much force upon the enormity of treating the right of representation as private property; making the extinction of a national Legislature a matter of bargain between the Government and a few individuals, and then throwing the cost of that bargain upon the nation. But in truth the measure was necessary if the Union was to be carried, and its justification must stand or fall with the general policy of the Government.

Eighty boroughs, returning 160 members, were in this manner purchased at the cost of 1,260,000*l.*, which was added to the Irish national debt, and thus made a perpetual charge upon the country. The sum of 15,000*l.* which was given for each borough does not appear to have been unreasonable. 'It is well known,' Grattan wrote to the citizens of Dublin in 1797, 'that the price of boroughs is from 14,000*l.* to 16,000*l.*, and has in the course of not many years increased one-third—a proof at once of the extravagance and audacity of this abuse.'[2] The convulsions of the rebellion had, it is true, lowered the value of borough property, and produced an insecurity which no doubt greatly assisted the measure, but it was only equitable that the compensation should be calculated by the market value before the civil war began. It is remarkable that the largest sum given in compensation went to Lord Downshire, who was a vehement opponent of the Union. He received 52,500*l.* as the owner of seven borough seats. The next largest sum was 45,000*l.*, which went to Lord Ely. Of the whole sum, about a third part was paid to opponents of the Union. In some cases

[1] Twiss's *Life of Eldon*, ii. 173, 174.

[2] Grattan's *Miscellaneous Works*, p. 57. Some statistics about the price of borough seats in Ireland at different periods, will be found in Ball's *Irish Legislative Systems*, p. 286.

the compensation for a single borough was distributed among two or more persons, and the compensation paid for the Church boroughs was applied to ecclesiastical purposes.[1]

These figures, however, only give an imperfect and approximate measure of the amount of borough interest in the Irish Parliament, and of the relative weight of that interest on the two sides of the question. Several of the close boroughs were allowed to send one member to the Imperial Parliament, and one member in the British House of Commons being considered equal to two in the Irish one, no compensation in these cases was given. Several seats were not reckoned strictly close, though a few great families exercised an overwhelming influence over them, and some borough owners were accustomed to purchase single nominations from others, and thus exercised in fact a much larger parliamentary influence than appears from the compensation they received. The same statute which provided for the compensation of the borough owners, provided also that full compensation should be granted to all persons whose offices were abolished or diminished in value by the Union. Rather more than 30,000*l.* a year was granted in annuities to officers or attendants of the two Houses of Parliament, by a separate statute.[2]

Another supplementary measure was a great remodelling of the House of Commons, through the operation of the Place Bill.

It was the firm resolution of the Government, that they would not dissolve Parliament, and submit the great question of the maintenance of the national Legislature to the free judgment of the constituencies. From such a step, wrote Cornwallis, 'we could derive no possible benefit.'[3] At the same time, they desired to change the composition of the House of Commons, which in 1799 had so decisively rejected the measure, and in this object they were eminently successful. In December, Castlereagh wrote that not less than twenty-two seats were vacant, which would be filled by their friends,[4] and in the few months that elapsed between the prorogation of Parliament in 1799, and the Union debates of 1800, no less than sixty-three seats became

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 321–324; 40 Geo. III. c. 34 1,400,000*l.* was granted for the purposes of this statute, but this extended to some other forms of compensation beside that of the borough patrons.

[2] 40 Geo. III. c. 34, 50. See, too, *Annual Register*, 1800, pp. 145, 146

[3] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 111.

[4] Ibid. p. 150.

vacant.[1] In this manner, without a dissolution, more than a fifth part of the House was renewed. A few of the vacancies were due to deaths, and a few to changes of office arising from the dismissal of officials who opposed the Union. In other cases men who were not prepared to vote for the Union, were willing to accept the promise of some lucrative office and leave Parliament;[2] but the great majority of these changes were due to the conversion of the borough patrons. Members holding seats by their favour, who were unwilling to support the Union, considered themselves bound to accept nominal offices and vacate their seats, and other members were brought in for the express purpose of voting for the Union. Several of them were Englishmen, wholly unconnected with Ireland, and some were generals of the Staff. In the case of borough members who had purchased their seats, a different rule prevailed, and they were entitled to vote irrespective of their patrons.[3]

At the same time, the whole force of Government patronage in all its branches was steadily employed. The formal and

[1] See Grattan's *Speeches*, iv. 37.

[2] A private letter of Lord Castlereagh to his successor, Abbot, about the end of 1801, gives an example of this. 'When Mr. K. . . . vacated his seat for P. . . . in favour of a supporter of Government, he received an assurance of the first chairman's place that should fall vacant. Very shortly after, and during the struggle, that for Tyrone became so, and, of course, under his engagement it belonged to Mr. K. We found that Government would be involved in extreme difficulty with one of its most important and indeed most disinterested friends, if that situation was not open to Lord Abercorn's recommendation. I was directed by Lord Cornwallis to see Mr. K. and to endeavour to prevail on him to waive his claim, assuring him that Government would not ultimately suffer him to be a loser.' He did so, and thus had an indisputable claim on the Government. (*Colchester MSS.*)

[3] In Bishop Percy's letters we have an illustration of the working of this system. The Bishop writes, that two of Lord Downshire's members had lost their places for opposing the Union, but Mr. Magenis 'has made his peace with Government, and now is strong for an Union, as his son Willy tells me, and that his father is to have a better place (and by the bye is also promised some good Church preferment for his son). I asked him how Lord Downshire would like this. He told me that his father had paid Lord D. for his seat in Parliament this time, so was at liberty to dispose of his vote (a curious traffic), but Mrs. Brush thinks it must have been bought cheap, as the rebellion expected, and the fear of an invasion, made a seat in Parliament so cheap it might be purchased for 600*l.* or 700*l.* I hope this shocking trade is drawing to an end, and all the abominable borough sales will cease in this country if the Union should take place.' 'Old Richard Magenis and some others who stood aloof, have now joined the Ministry. His price is some good preferment promised to Willy. Of this they make no secret.' 'I believe I mentioned that Mr. Magenis had given 1,000*l.* for his seat in the present Parliament, which his Lordship [Lord Downshire] had sent to return him, but he refused to take it, as he hopes to make a better market for his vote.' (Bishop Percy to his wife, Aug. 1, Dec. 10, 18, 1799. British Museum.)

authoritative announcement, that the English Government were resolved to persevere until the Union was carried; that though it might be defeated session after session, and Parliament after Parliament, it would always be reintroduced, and that support of it would be considered hereafter the main test by which all claims to Government favour would be determined, had an irresistible force. The dismissal of the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Prime Sergeant, because they refused to support the Union, needs no defence, for no Administration could possibly continue if some of its leading members were opposed to the main objects of its policy. The dismissal of Lord Downshire from his regiment, from the Privy Council, and from the governorship of his county, was defended on the ground that he had been guilty of a grave breach of military discipline in sending down a petition against the Union to his regiment of militia to be signed; and in the opinion of Lord Cornwallis, this dismissal, by evincing the determination of the Government and by terrifying their opponents, did more than any other single step to carry the measure.[1] But in addition to these, a number of obscure men in non-political places were dismissed, because either they or their relatives declined to support it. In spite of the Place Bill of 1793, which had somewhat diminished the number of placeholders who might sit in Parliament,[2] there appear to have been in the last Irish House of Commons no less than seventy-two persons who either held civil places or pensions from the Crown, or were generals or staff officers.[3] All these men knew that their promotion, most

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 179, 188, 192, 197.

[2] See vol. vi. pp. 599–602.

[3] In the course of the struggle, Mr. O'Donnell moved that the address to the Lord Lieutenant in favour of the Union should be presented by 'all the general and staff officers, the placemen and pensioners,' who were members of the House of Commons, and the names of these members were then drawn up, with the offices they held. The list (which contains seventy-two names) will be found in Grattan's *Speeches*, iv. 5–7, and in Grattan's *Life*, v. 173. In the protest drawn up by the leaders of the Opposition, in the form of an address to the King, they say, 'Of those who voted for the Union, we beg leave to inform your Majesty that seventy-six had places or pensions under the Crown, and others were under the immediate influence of constituents who held great offices under the Crown.' (Grattan's *Speeches*, iv. 32.) Lord Cornwallis, on the other hand, sent over to England a return of the members of the Irish House of Commons who held civil offices of any kind whatever. The editor of the *Cornwallis Correspondence* says, 'There were fifty-six members holding offices at pleasure, of whom four held also offices for life, six had offices for life only, and nine were King's

of them knew that their retention of their emoluments, was in the power of the Government, and would be determined by the votes they were about to give. It was part of the Union scheme that not more than twenty additional placemen should be introduced by it into the Imperial Parliament. Plunket, in one of his speeches, declared with great force and eloquence, that if there had been only twenty placemen in the Irish House of Commons, or if the placemen who sat in it were allowed to vote by ballot or according to their real wishes, it would have been utterly impossible to have carried the Union.

Hope, however, was a more powerful agent of corruption than fear, and it is, I believe, scarcely an exaggeration to say that everything in the gift of the Crown in Ireland; in the Church, the army, the law, the revenue, was at this period uniformly and steadily devoted to the single object of carrying the Union. From the great noblemen who were bargaining for their marquisates and their ribbands; from the Archbishop of Cashel, who agreed to support the Union, on being promised the reversion of the see of Dublin, and a permanent seat in the Imperial House of Lords;[1] the virus of corruption extended and descended through every fibre and artery of the political system, including crowds of obscure men who had it in their power to assist or obstruct addresses on the question. No two facts are at this time more conspicuous, than the immense preponderance of legal ability that was arrayed in opposition to the Union, and the immense profusion of legal honours that were lavished on its supporters. Twenty-three practising barristers voted for the

Counsel, or had patents of precedence. Over these fifteen, Government had, of course, no influence.' (*Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 243.) In this list the military posts and the pensions are not included; on the other hand, the position of King's Counsel and patents of precedence are not counted in the Opposition list.

[1] I have collected in another book some curious facts about Archbishop Agar's conduct on this occasion. (*Leaders of Public Opinion in Ireland*, pp. 157, 158.) The Primacy fell vacant when the Union debates were going on, and Cornwallis tried (though without success) to have an Irishman appointed. 'It would have a very bad effect,' he wrote, 'at this time, to send a stranger to supersede the whole bench of bishops, and I should likewise be much embarrassed by the stop that would be put to the succession amongst the Irish clergy at this critical period; when I am beyond measure pressed for ecclesiastical preferment.' (*Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 210.) 'Lord Clifden, to whom we stand indebted for seven Union votes; Lord Callan, who has two friends in the House of Commons, and Mr. Preston, member for Navan, all nearly related to the Archbishop of Cashel, came to me this day to request that I would agree to submit his name to his Majesty's consideration for the succession to the Primacy.' (Ibid. pp. 217. 218.)

Union, in the House of Commons, in 1800. In 1803 six of them were upon the Bench, while eight others had received high honours under the Crown.[1] Thirty-two barristers voted for the Union at the bar debate in 1799. In 1803 not more than five of them were unrewarded.[2] Charles Kendal Bushe was then a young lawyer starting in his career, and overwhelmed with embarrassments from his efforts to pay the debts of his father, and he has left a touching account of the struggle he underwent from the dazzling promises that were made him by the Government, if he would only place his eloquence and his vote at the service of the Union.[3] Some shameful promises, however, were shamefully broken. In one of his last letters, written just before leaving Ireland, Cornwallis sent to England a list of fifty promises of places, pensions, legal appointments, and promotions in the peerage which he had formally made on the part of his Majesty's Government, acting by the direction and authority of the Ministers in England, but which, nevertheless, were still unfulfilled. With a single exception, they seem all to have been made for the purpose of carrying the Union. In the list of names, there are thirty-five members of the House of Commons who had voted for it, and three of the pensions which had not been promised by name to members of Parliament would actually have been received by them. Some of these acknowledged promises remained unfulfilled up to the change of Government in 1806, and were then repudiated by the new Ministers.[4]

[1] See the names and the appointments in Barnes's *Rights of the Imperial Crown of Ireland* (1803), pp. 335–337.

[2] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 18.

[3] Grattan's *Life*, v. 114, 115. The following curious letter gives a vivid picture of the kind of negotiation that was going on. A Government agent writes to Marsden, that he had been visiting the seat of Colonel Almuty at Brianstown, near Longford. The Union was mentioned. 'I suffered him to spend himself in a philippic against it. I made a few observations, and added that the county of Longford had addressed. This he denied; he said it was only the Catholics, and there was *scarcely* a Protestant in the county for it. He is a man of much influence, and stands well with the Catholics. His affairs are much embarrassed. He has two sons in the line, one a lieutenant in the 6th. . . . He is now in great distress, as the lieutenancy is not paid for, and his lands are under cust^m^. . . . I hinted that this would be a good time for him to take a lead with the Freeholders, as no man of any consequence had stirred, and that the first mover would be likely to attract the notice of Government. I said that he was foolishly letting slip the only opportunity that might offer of showing his zeal for Administration, who certainly were very much alive upon the subject. He seemed to think the measure would be carried. . . . I have not yet had any opportunity here of feeling the people, but I incline to think that the Catholics are its best friends, and the Protestants seem sullen.' (E. Purden to Marsden, Oct. 14, 1799, I.S.P.O.)

[4] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 339, 340. This letter is dated Feb.

The details of these negotiations have for the most part been destroyed.[1] The Under Secretary Cooke, and Alexander Marsden, who was, at the time of the Union, Assistant Secretary in the Law Department, and who succeeded Cooke as Under Secretary, were chiefly entrusted with them, and Marsden appears to have been afterwards pursued with some rancour by disappointed claimants.[2] Enough, however, remains to show beyond all real doubt, the character of the transaction, and to justify the emphatic and often repeated statements of Grattan, Plunket, Bushe, Parsons, and Grey. As late as 1830, Lord Grey, while

19, 1801. It will be observed, that these promises were quite independent of the regular compensations which had been granted by Act of Parliament in the preceding year. See, too, on the 'heavy mortgage' upon the patronage of Ireland in 1801, Lord Colchester's *Diary and Correspondence*, i. 325.

[1] Thus, near the end of 1801, Castlereagh writes to his successor, Abbot: 'Mr. Grady's case is one of those with respect to which I took the liberty of referring you for more precise information to Mr. Cooke, for reasons which will naturally suggest themselves; through whom the engagement was made with the approbation of the Lord Lieutenant. It was one of those arrangements pressed upon us by the necessity of the case, at a moment when we were not altogether in a situation, consistent with the safety of the measure entrusted to us, to decide merely upon the personal merits of those who had the means to forward or impede it. The number of applications to which you have been exposed as the result of that measure, have enabled you to judge of the embarrassments under which we acted.' (Castlereagh to Abbot (secret), Oct. 17.) 'The consequence [of some arrangements that have been described] would be, that the Lord Lieutenant would be able to fulfil the expectations of promotion held out by the last Government to Mr. Grady, which would discharge a claim in many respects of a pressing nature, by his succeeding to the office of Counsel of the Revenue.' (Abbot to Addington, Jan. 19, 1802. *Colchester MSS.*)

[2] In November 1803, the Government was severely blamed in Parliament for not having foreseen Emmet's insurrection, and some special attack appears to have been contemplated on Marsden. A copy is preserved of the following very significant letter, which Wickham then wrote (Nov. 18, 1803) to the Lord Lieutenant: 'In writing to Mr. Yorke on the subject of the personal attack that is intended to be made upon Marsden, your Excellency will perhaps do well to call his attention to these points. 1. Marsden was the person who conducted the *secret part* of the Union. *Ergo*, the price of each Unionist, as well as the respective conduct and character of each, is well known to him. Those who figure away and vapour in so great a style in London, are well known to him. They live in hourly dread of being unmasked, and they all consider him as the person who opposes their interested views and jobs by his representation of the whole truth. 2. Marsden, as a lawyer, is supposed to be the person who gives to the Government the opinion that is acted upon as to legal promotions. He is, therefore, supposed to be the man who has stood in the way of our filling the Bench and the confidential law situations under the Crown with improper persons, by giving a fair and right interpretation to the Union engagements. 3. Many of the persons who make a great figure at the levee, and on the benches of either House, in London, really dare not look Marsden in the face. I have often witnessed this, and have been diverted by it. With your Excellency and with me they have an air of uncomfortable greatness, but with him they quite shrink away.' (I.S.P.O.)

asserting in the strongest terms the fatal consequences that would arise from any attempt to tamper with the settlement of 1800, did not hesitate to avow his abiding conviction, that 'there were never worse means resorted to for carrying any measure,' than those by which the Union was accomplished,[1] and Grattan himself expressed his belief, that of those who voted for it, not more than seven were unbribed.[2]

There is one form of corruption, however, about which there may be some controversy, and has probably been much exaggeration. It has been asserted by O'Connell, that immense sums were spent in direct bribes, and that as much as 8,000*l.* was given for a vote in favour of the Union, and it was certainly the belief of the Opposition that direct bribery was extensively practised. It is scarcely probable that this can have been done with the knowledge of Lord Cornwallis. Some leaders of the Opposition appear to have attempted to meet corruption by corruption, and are accused of having subscribed a large sum for the purpose of purchasing votes. Lord Cornwallis, when writing about a bribe which he believed had been offered by the Opposition for a vote, added, 'If we had the means, and were disposed to make such vile use of them, we dare not trust the credit of Government in the hands of such rascals.'[3] It is certain that there was no Irish fund from which any great sum could have been drawn by the Government for the purpose of bribery. A secret service fund of 5,000*l.* a year, which had been authorised in 1793, could have gone but a little way in purchasing a majority, even if it were applied to that object, and a small additional sum, which had been subsequently granted for pensions to informers in the rebellion, was altogether devoted to its ostensible purpose.[4] The 5,000*l.* which had been sent over from England in the beginning of 1799, appears to have been chiefly, if not solely, employed in purchasing support outside the House. Wickham, in sending it, added, 'The Duke of Portland has

[1] Speech on Nov. 2, 1830. (*Parl. Debates.*) See, too, in the same debate, the emphatic statement of Lord Farnham, an old opponent of the Union, but at the same time a strong anti-repealer.

[2] Grattan's *Life*, v. 113.

[3] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 184. This letter, however, was written on Feb. 8, 1800, and a great deal appears to have happened after that date.

[4] See on the absence, before 1793, of any secret service fund like that of England, vol. iv. p. 519. The Act of 1793 was 33 Geo. III. c. 34. On the pensions to informers, see *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 319–321.

every reason to hope, that means will soon be found of placing a larger sum at the Lord Lieutenant's disposal.'[1] Shortly before the meeting of Parliament in 1800, Castlereagh urgently demanded a similar and if possible a larger sum, and 5,000*l.* more appears to have been transmitted, with a memorandum stating that 'the fund was good security for a still further sum, though not immediately, if it could be well laid out and furnished on the spot.'[2] Two months later, Cooke wrote to England for a fresh remittance, which he described as 'absolutely essential' for the increasing demands. A 'considerable sum' was raised by loan from a private individual, who soon pressed for repayment; and savings were made out of the Irish civil list, and applied as secret service money to meet many engagements that had been entered into. Before the session had closed, Portland and Pitt were again entreated to send over money; and Pitt, while expressing his regret that he could not send as much as was wanted, promised annual instalments of from 8,000*l.* to 10,000*l.* for five years, which were probably intended to liquidate Union engagements.[3] One supporter of the Government in the House of Commons appears to have been excused a debt of 3,000*l.*[4] On the whole, I should gather from these facts, that direct money bribes were given, though not to the extent that has been alleged; but it is probable that the greater part of this expenditure went in buying seats from members who were willing to vacate them, and in that case the transaction did not differ sensibly from the purchase of boroughs by Administration, which up to a still later period was undoubtedly practised in England.[5] Several transactions of this kind were rumoured, although on no good

[1] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, ii. 82.

[2] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 151, 156.

[3] Ibid. pp. 202, 226, 308. 'Mr. Pitt,' wrote Cooke to Castlereagh in April, 'approves of your taking advantage of these vacancies in the civil list. Quere: Will the law allow you to increase the number of the Commissioners of Boards?' (P. 226.) In July 1800, Castlereagh wrote, 'I hope you will settle with King our further ways and means; from the best calculation I can make, we shall *absolutely* require the remainder of what I asked for, namely, fifteen, to wind up matters, exclusive of the annual arrangement; and an immediate supply is much wanted. If it cannot be sent speedily, I hope we may discount it here.' (Ibid. p. 278.) In Lord Colchester's *Diary* (May 1801) there is an entry, 'The money for engagements of the Union, as authorised to be taken out of the privy purse, to be settled between Mr. Pitt and Lord Castlereagh' (i. 266).

[4] See the letter, countersigned by the Attorney-General, in Barrington's *Rise and Fall of the Irish Nation*, c. xxvii.

[5] May's *Constitutional History*, i. 291.

authority, and we have the express statement of Edgeworth, that in 1800 he was offered 3,000 guineas for his seat during the few remaining weeks of the session.[1]

The various forms of pressure and influence I have described, were steadily exerted through the whole period of the recess and through the decisive session that followed, and it is by no means surprising that they should have converted the minority of 1799 into the majority of 1800. 'There is an opposition in Parliament to the measure of Union,' wrote Cornwallis in May 1799, 'formidable in character and talents. Their numbers, though they have not proved equal to shake the Government, have for the present rendered the prosecution of the measure in Parliament impracticable.' But if the Governments in both countries pursued their end without flinching, he had great hope of success. 'We reckon at present,' he added, 'on the Union, 148 certain with us, 98 against, and 54 whose line cannot yet be positively ascertained.' 'Your Grace will easily believe, that the usual importunity of political friends has risen upon the present occasion with the difficulties of Government and with the nature of the question itself, which appears to them in prudence to enjoin the most speedy accomplishment of their several objects, as the measure is considered by them as fatal to the usual mode of giving effect to their claims.'[2] A month later, the Government strength in the Commons was believed to have risen to 165. In December it was calculated at 180, but Cornwallis placed little confidence in his supporters. 'I entertain every day more doubt of our success in the great question of Union,' he wrote at the very end of 1799; 'we have a lukewarm, and, in some instances, an unwilling majority; the enemy have a bold and deeply interested minority, which will, I am afraid, even after our friends are reckoned, run us much nearer than most people expect.'[3]

Outside the House, however, the Government believed that the Union project was steadily and rapidly gaining ground, and, after making all due allowance for the natural bias of Lord

[1] *Life of Edgeworth*, ii. 231.

[2] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 101. (R.O.) The last two passages are omitted in the published letter.

[3] Ibid. pp. 105, 151, 153. In November, the Speaker is said to have still asserted that the Opposition had 140 votes. (*Castlereagh Correspondence*, iii. 1.)

Cornwallis, and for the partisan character of the sources from which he chiefly obtained his information, it remains tolerably certain that the measure was finding a real and increasing support. The opinions of Cornwallis varied from week to week, but his general belief appears to have been, that the great mass of the Irish people were thoroughly disaffected to the English rule, and would welcome with delight a French invasion, but that they were absolutely without attachment to their Parliament, and perfectly indifferent to the question of Union. In Dublin, he admitted, there was a fierce and passionate hostility to it. In the central counties of Leinster, the strong predominance of feeling was against it, but elsewhere the Lord Lieutenant believed that it was viewed, either with indifference or with favour. In April 1799, after describing the extreme disaffection and the extreme corruption around him, he said, 'The great mass of the people neither think or care' about the Union.[1] In July he repeated, 'The mass of the people of Ireland do not care one farthing about the Union, and they equally hate both Government and Opposition.' 'It is in Dublin only where any popular clamour can possibly be excited.'[2] 'I am preparing,' he wrote in the same month, 'to set out to-morrow on a tour for three weeks to the South, for the purpose of obtaining declarations &c. in favour of the Union. On the whole, we certainly gain ground.'[3]

His tour proved exceedingly satisfactory, and in August he went much farther than he had yet done, and assured Portland of 'the general good disposition' of the people of Munster 'towards the Government, and their cordial approbation of the measure of Union.' 'This sentiment,' he continued, 'is confined to no particular class or description of men, but equally pervades both the Catholic and Protestant bodies, and I was much gratified in observing that those feelings which originated with the higher orders, have in a great degree extended themselves to the body of the people. Were the Commons of Ireland as naturally connected with the people as they are in England, and as liable to receive their impressions, with the prospects we have out of doors, I should feel that the question was in a great degree carried.'

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 93.

[2] Ibid. pp. 110, 111.

[3] Ibid. p. 118.

He believed that the real, or at the least the most formidable, opposition to be encountered, was an opposition of self-interest, arising from the fact that the proposed measure 'goes to new-model the public consequence of every man in Parliament, and to diminish most materially the authority of the most powerful.'[1]

In October he made a journey through Ulster, for the purpose of eliciting Union demonstrations in the province, and he wrote to Portland that, though it would be 'unsafe to trust entirely to appearances,' there was 'reason to entertain very sanguine hopes of the good disposition of the people in that part of the kingdom towards the very important measure of a legislative Union.' He had not ventured to enter the county of Down, where the influence of Lord Downshire was supreme, and he considered it too perilous to attempt to obtain addresses from the counties of Monaghan, Cavan, and Fermanagh, though the 'corporation and principal inhabitants' of the town of Monaghan had addressed him in favour of the Union; but in a large number of towns through which he passed, addresses were presented to him by the corporation and 'principal inhabitants,' and in two or three places he had unexpected encouragement. The priests and some leading Catholics came forward at Dundalk with an address in favour of the Union. At Belfast, though there was much anti-Union feeling, '150 of the principal merchants and inhabitants' had met him at a dinner, which was understood to be exclusively composed of supporters of the Union. At Londonderry he had been received with genuine enthusiasm. The town was illuminated, and 'Success to the Union resounded from every quarter.'[2] 'The Union,' he wrote in November, 'is, I trust, making progress. The great body of the people in general, and of the Catholics in particular, are decidedly for it.'[3]

He relied largely on this disposition to justify to his own mind the measures he was taking, and nothing was neglected that could foster it. Every pamphlet or speech of any merit in favour of the scheme was systematically, extensively, and gratuitously circulated. Great pains were taken to influence the press. McKenna, the well-known Catholic pamphleteer, had been often employed by the Government; he appears now to have rendered

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 121, 122.
[2] Ibid. pp. 138–140.
[3] Ibid. p. 143.

them material service, and he was recommended as a skilful and willing agent for superintending the Unionist literature.[1] Strenuous efforts were made to obtain declarations in favour of the Union, and many came in from bodies of men in different parts of Ireland. Their significance, however, may very easily be exaggerated. Except in Galway, the supporters of the measure had hitherto never ventured to convene county or popular meetings,[2] but the great borough owners and landlords, who had been won over, the sheriffs in the counties, and other important adherents of the Union, were busily employed, at the request of the Lord Lieutenant, in procuring signatures in favour of it. With so vast an amount of territorial influence and Government patronage at their disposal, they had little difficulty in doing so, and men who were sincerely in favour of the measure were undoubtedly scattered, though not very thickly scattered, over the whole island. It is remarkable, however, that, in spite of all the efforts of the Government, the signatures to these addresses did not number more than a small fraction—probably not more than a twelfth part—of those which were appended to the petitions to the House of Commons against the measure.

The support of the corporations of many important towns was obtained, and this may at first sight appear more significant, but these corporations were very small bodies, and frequently completely subservient to some one great nobleman. Thus, to give but a few examples: Lord Donegal could control the Corporation of Belfast, Lord Roden the Corporation of Dundalk, and the Primate that of Armagh, while the influence of Lord Waterford at Waterford, and that of Lord Ormond at Kilkenny, was little, if at all, less absolute. The Corporation of Cork appears

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 105; *Castlereagh Correspondence*, iii. 26, 27, 353. In a memorial sent to the Chief Secretary, Abbot (Oct. 13, 1801), McKenna said, 'The four Administrations which successively ruled Ireland, from 1793 to 1800, have each, unsolicited by me, called for that little aid to the cause of civil society and good government which I was able to contribute. . . . But the affair of the Union constitutes that ground on which my claim, at least to a certain extent, is beyond all question irresistible. You know that, in consequence of application made to me, I gave up my time and trouble to the cultivation of that question. If contributing nearly as much as any other person to render that transaction palatable to the public, and to extend the credit of it, be a service to Government, that service I must say I rendered. A positive engagement was made me.' (*Colchester MSS.*)

[2] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii 105, 129.

to have been under the combined influence of Lord Longueville, Lord Donoughmore, and Lord Shannon, who were all supporters of the Union.[1] It is true, as Lord Cornwallis remarked, that the words 'principal inhabitants' were usually added to the corporation addresses; but, if the opponents of the measure may be believed, they were far from being warranted by the facts.

The task of measuring with accuracy the public opinion of a country on a political question which was never submitted to the test of a general election, is an impossible one, but a few extracts from confidential letters to the Government, and a few cross lights thrown on this obscure subject from various quarters and from different points of view, may assist our judgment. I have mentioned in the last chapter the extremely reluctant support which Lord Carleton had given to the measure, and have quoted the desponding letter he wrote to Pelham immediately after speaking in favour of it. In the March of 1799, he repeated his remonstrance in very earnest terms. He said that he had always looked to two objects, to obtain an Union and to preserve it, and that the Government seemed to him to have neglected the latter. 'Were the French to obtain any footing in this kingdom,' he continued, 'I see the likelihood of their procuring a much more powerful support than that which a few months ago would have been afforded them.' The Union, he complained, had been brought forward when the minds of the people were quite unprepared for it, and the result of this 'precipitate obtrusion' was 'much hazard, not only to those individuals who have supported the measure of Union, but also to the safety of this kingdom, and to the permanence of its connection with Great Britain.' 'Those who are disposed to view the conduct of the British Government in an unfavourable light, are led to suspect that the rebellion has been suffered to continue, in order to forward the measure of an Union. Every exertion should be made to remove the suspicion, and to convince the people of this country that they are indebted for the restoration of tranquillity to . . . a British army, brought to this country for their preservation.' 'I agree with you in opinion, that, circumstanced as this country now is, the measure ought not to be forced or accelerated. The public mind is not yet prepared for it, and whatever irritates, will either impede attainment of the object, or if attained will render its

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 124, 125, 138, 139.

continuance so precarious, as to make the measure noxious rather than beneficial.' He speaks of the great social division the question had produced, and of the widespread fear that the real aim and object of the Union was equality of taxation, raising the taxation of Ireland to the much higher level of England.[1]

Pelham's old correspondent, Alexander, was hardly more encouraging. He wrote shortly after listening to the great speech of Foster in April, and he was evidently profoundly under its impression. He describes its powerful effect on men of all classes, and added that the measure 'will be most strenuously opposed and most hollowly supported.' 'Although parliamentary reform was the ground of rebellion, and its plausible pretence, men in disturbed times care so little as to the forms of vesting power, so that it be exercised by their own party, that now the populace willingly admit the Parliament to be the voice of the people and its free organ.' 'The very quiet produced by the energy and moderation of Government, and the aid of the military, is now attributed to the wisdom of Parliament.' 'Rely upon it,' the writer continued, 'the measure cannot be carried by force, nor by gross or open corruption. If carried, it will not hold. A permanent governor, an honest and effective administration, a combination of men of talent and labour, can alone give security to the measure. Such a system will govern our country quietly, and render it a noble ally to England.'[2]

From Connaught, Lord Altamount sent very favourable reports. In Mayo he thought there was 'a more general concurrence than in most parts of Ireland' in favour of the Union, though there was some opposition among the Catholics. 'The county of Galway is brought over very fairly to the measure, the property completely with it, and the Catholics as forward as their neighbours.'[3] He had succeeded in obtaining the signatures of most of the owners of property in Mayo. 'If the Roman Catholics stand forward,' he said, 'it will be unwillingly; they are keeping back decidedly, but many will be influenced, and some few who connected themselves with the Protestants during the disturbance, will be zealously forward on the present occasion. The priests have all offered to sign; and though I am not proud of many of them as associates, I will take their signatures to prevent a pos-

[1] Lord Carleton to Pelham, March 1, 1799. (*Pelham MSS.*)

[2] Alexander to Pelham, April 12, 1799. (Ibid.)

[3] Lord Altamount, May 26, 1799. (I.S.P.O.)

sibility of a counter declaration. I hear the titular Archbishop has expressed himself inclined to the measure. This day I have sent round to all the Catholics of property in the country. I may be mistaken, but in my judgment the wish of most of them would be to stand neuter; or perhaps, if they had any countenance, to oppose it—that is the fact. Several will sign from influence, some from fear, but the majority, I believe, will pretend that they have given opinions already, and cannot decently retract them. . . . Every man applied to, of all persuasions, wants to make it a personal compliment.' 'I have found,' he adds, 'to my infinite surprise, that the county and the town of Sligo, without the slightest interference and against all their representatives, are decided friends to the Union. I know of no part of Ireland where the *unbiassed* mind of the public is so generally with it. . . . Roscommon is against it; but for that, the bulk, or indeed the entire of the province, might be considered as pledged to the measure, or ready to be so.' [1]

In Kerry, Lord Castlereagh was informed about this time, that 'the entire property' of the county was for the Union, and he was convinced that the measure was gaining friends, and was 'in some parts of the kingdom decidedly popular.' [2] Lord Waterford said that the opinion of the county and city of Waterford was nearly unanimous in favour of it.[3] Lord Landaff declared that almost all the considerable landlords in Tipperary, except Lord Mountcashel and Lord Lismore, took the same side, and Castlereagh had much hope that it would be possible to carry a county meeting in favour of the Union.[4] Long afterwards, in the British House of Lords, Lord Donoughmore declared that 'the first favourable turn' which the Union question experienced after its rejection in 1799, came from Tipperary, where an address in its favour was carried on his proposal, and he added that his success was largely due to the support of the Catholics, who believed that their emancipation would be a certain consequence of the Union.[5] It is probable,

[1] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, ii. 327–329. (June 5, 1799.)
[2] Ibid. p. 345. (July 6.)
[3] Ibid. p. 394.
[4] Ibid. p. 354; iii. 228.
[5] See Lord Donoughmore's reply in the debate in the House of Lords, June 6, 1810. Cornwallis confirms (*Correspondence*, iii. 125) the great services of Lord Donoughmore on this question. Like his father, Lord Donoughmore was a warm friend of the Catholics, and he appears to have had considerable influence among them.

however, that the political forces in this county were somewhat miscalculated, for almost at the last stage of the debates the member for Tipperary with his two sons abandoned the Government, though he had engaged to give the Union an unqualified support, and though 'the objects he solicited were promised,' alleging that 'the principal part of the respectable freeholders of the county of Tipperary had signed resolutions against the Union,' though many of them had before instructed him to support it.[1] In Limerick, it was said, the corporation was hostile, but the bulk of the property of the county was decidedly favourable to the measure.[2] In Derry and Donegal, the gentry were 'in general well disposed,' and the linen merchants, though they took no active part, were supposed to be 'on the whole rather favourable,' under the expectation that it would secure their industry.[3] Londonderry, more than any other town in Ulster, appears to have desired the Union.[4]

A few additional letters of a more general description may be noticed. Lord de Clifford appears to have been a retiring, honest, and unpolitical peer, and he had taken no part in the divisions of 1799, but no less than four members of the House of Commons were returned by his influence.[5] In reply to a letter strongly urging him to vote for the Union, he expressed his deep attachment to the present Administration, and his extreme reluctance to oppose any measure they brought forward; but the Union, he said, was so supremely important, that it was a question on which he must think for himself. If the great majority of the people were against it, the present seemed to him a peculiarly inopportune time for introducing it, and 'even were the majority of the well-affected in favour of it,' he did not believe that it would ultimately be likely to work for good. All who really knew Ireland, knew that the very great majority of the people looked on the present owners of land as a set of usurpers, and had been long waiting for an opportunity to rise and wrest their property from them. If the late terrible rebellion had been circumscribed in its area and successfully suppressed, this was much more due, he believed, to the personal influence exercised by the resident country gentlemen over their neigh-

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 180, 182.
[2] Ibid. p. 125.
[3] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, ii. 352.
[4] Ibid. iii. 280.
[5] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 164.

bours and tenants, than to the English troops. 'If by forcing an Union upon this country, you disgust one half of these gentlemen, and convert the other half into absentees, you will leave the country a prey to the disaffected, and the consequence, I fear, would be fatal.' The Scotch parallel was wholly misleading. In Scotland at the time of the Union a large portion of the proprietors of land were attached to another king, while the people did not care who was king, and blindly followed their chiefs. In Ireland 'the great body of the people are against you,' while the presence and the constant influence of a loyal gentry form the main support of the connection.[1]

Luke Fox, a clever lawyer who was raised to the bench for his support of the Union, believed that Ireland was inhabited by three nations, which were utterly different in character, principles, and habits, and not less clearly divided by their opinions about the Union. The Protestants of the Established Church, 'from every motive of a monopolising interest, are determined opponents of the scheme of Union,' and it would be impossible to gain them, except by influence.

The Catholics, on the other hand, desired, above all things, to get rid of their present rulers, and to emerge from slavery into the class of British citizens, and they could be easily gained by concessions. Nor is it in the least probable that such concessions would alienate the Protestants. 'Religion is a mere pretence. The true bone of contention is the monopoly of Irish power and patronage,' and once the ascendant Protestant descends through the Union from the position of ruler, the question of religious disqualification would assume a wholly different aspect. At the same time, the concessions which Luke Fox deemed most necessary were not concessions of political power. A commutation of tithes, and a decent provision for the Catholic clergy, were measures which were urgently necessary, for which the country was fully ripe, and which ought to be carried without delay. Another scarcely less urgent measure was the foundation of a Catholic College connected with the Protestant University. The Catholic youth should be given ample facilities for obtaining the best education in the country, and in secular matters the Protestants and Catholics should be educated together, as they were in Holland and in many parts of Germany. In this

[1] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, ii. 355–358.

manner durable friendships would be formed, and the next generation of Irishmen would be far more united than the present one. Ultimately, he believed the King should be invested with a patronage of popish bishoprics and other dignities, similar to that which the French king had always possessed, and the two religions should be placed on the same plane of dignity; but for this the time was not ripe.

As for the Presbyterians, they hated all monarchy, but Fox believed that they were perfectly indifferent to the Union, and would not quit their looms and bleach-greens for a single day either to support or to protest against it. 'They are neutral, and not to be meddled with.'

On the whole, this writer considered that the Union would prove an inestimable benefit both to Ireland and the Empire, but only on condition of the conciliation of the Catholics. 'Without comprehending the Catholics, in interest and principle, an Union between the two countries can be neither durable nor useful.'[1]

It is a great misfortune to the historian of this period of Irish history, that the almost entire disappearance of the correspondence of the Speaker Foster, makes it impossible for us to follow, in their confidential and unreserved expression, the opinions of the man who then played the most important part in the opposition to the Union. One remarkable letter, however, written in the December of 1799, may be found. The Government, resenting bitterly his attitude, had just deprived his son of an office, and it was reported that Pitt had been expressing loud dissatisfaction at the conduct of Foster. The Speaker heard of this, and he wrote with much dignity to Pelham. He observed that, in a parliamentary life of nearly forty years, he had almost always been a supporter of the Government; that he had never supported it more vigorously or more earnestly than in the late very dangerous times; that he was still fully resolved to do so on every question but one, and that the last time he saw Pitt, he had told him frankly, and with a full statement of his reasons, that it was wholly impossible for him to support the Union. Knowing what his sentiments were, Pitt had no right to complain of the active part he had taken. 'I told him,' he says, 'that I was against the legislative Union,

[1] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, ii. 408–414.

and that if the measure was doubtful, the time was, in my mind, particularly inexpedient, and that I must declare my sentiments when called on. I added also, that nothing could induce me to change this opinion; but that if the sense of the nation, contrary to my belief, was fairly and clearly for the measure, I should yield to it, and endeavour in the detail to make it as little injurious and as beneficial as I could, and I particularly explained that by the sense of the nation I did not mean a small or influenced majority in the House, but the real uninfluenced sense of the country in general. This was in December. The sense of the country soon after appeared against the measure, and it was rejected by the House in January. . . . The subject is now, I hear, in contemplation to be renewed. My belief was then right, and I am still stronger in belief that the measure is more disliked now even than it was then; and I am persuaded that if he [Pitt] is rightly informed of the means resorted to, of the nature and history of many of the late addresses, and of the general opinion of people uninfluenced by fear or expectation, he will be convinced it is so. Intimidation, and depriving gentlemen of office for giving a free opinion when that opinion was avowed to be desired, and when the nature of the question made it peculiarly necessary that it should be so; the offering office to others who possessed different political creeds, are not means to obtain the real sentiments of the nation, nor can any man consider sentiments expressed under such circumstances to be so. . . . If ever the real, uninfluenced sentiments of the kingdom shall call for the measure, I will act as I have said, but I honestly own I never can expect them to be so. . . . I lament the unfortunate circumstances which have arisen to make me differ from Government. No consideration but the clearest conviction could induce me to do so, and that conviction is my own, without any party junction or association whatever. . . . The withdrawing all confidence, and even the usual official attention; the circulating pamphlets and newspaper paragraphs to run me down, and the depriving my son of office, are not means of persuasion to operate on me either the one way or the other. I will act uniformly, and if future time shall show I am mistaken in my opinion of the Union, I will at least enjoy the satisfaction of having acted with integrity.'[1]

[1] John Foster to Pelham, Dec. 8, 1799. (*Pelham MSS.*)

The Government, in endeavouring to influence Irish opinion, had the great advantage of the support of the heads of the two principal Churches in the country. The bishops of the Established Church were actuated partly by obvious motives of self-interest, and partly also by a belief that the Union would place their Church beyond all danger of attack, but their attitude during the struggle was not a very active one. Out of the twenty-two bishops, twelve only were present at the division on the Union in the House of Lords in 1799, and two of these—Dickson, the Bishop of Down and Connor, and Marlay, the Bishop of Waterford—both voted and protested against it.[1] The Protestant clergy do not appear to have taken any prominent part in procuring addresses for the Union, though there were some exceptions. Bishop Percy, who had been from the first a strong and very honest supporter of the measure, succeeded in inducing all the beneficed clergy of his diocese, except four or five, to join with him in an address to the Lord Lieutenant in its favour,[2] and similar addresses were signed by the bishops and clergy of Cork and Limerick.[3] O'Beirne, the Bishop of Meath—a man of great energy and some ability, who had been converted from Catholicism—was much consulted by the Government during the whole arrangement, and it is curious to find among the supporters of the Union the once familiar name of Lord Bristol, the Bishop of Derry. The great question that was pending could not, it is true, draw him from his retreat upon the Continent, but he authorised Lord Abercorn to place his name on an address in favour of it. This seems to have been his last appearance in Irish politics. The Primate appears to have refused to sign this address, although he had previously voted for the Union.[4] Trinity College, the great centre of Protestant learning, though

[1] Mant's *History of the Church of Ireland*, ii. 762.

[2] Bishop Percy to his wife, Oct. 10, 1799.

[3] This is stated in a letter of Bishop Percy, in the I.S.P.O., Oct. 9, 1799.

[4] Bishop Percy says: 'Lord Bristol has put his signature, yet the poor Primate, though that county [Tyrone] is chiefly in his diocese, and though he voted in Parliament for the Union, was not allowed—by Madam, I suppose—to add his name [to an address in favour of it].' (Dec. 10, 1799.) In Cox's *Irish Magazine* (Nov. 1807, p. 60) there is a letter which is said to have been written, in 1779, by the Bishop of Derry to Boswell, inquiring what effect the Scotch Union had exercised on the prosperity of Edinburgh. If this letter is genuine, it shows that Lord Bristol at that early date looked with some favour on the idea of an Union, and believed that, although Dublin would be against it, the rest of Ireland would probably welcome it.

divided, was on the whole not favourable to the Union; and it is remarkable that Magee, who was afterwards a very able and very typical archbishop, was one of its opponents.[1] George Knox and Arthur Browne, who were the members for the University, both spoke and voted against the Union in 1799. In the following year Browne changed his side and supported it; but he acknowledged in the House of Commons that he was acting in opposition to the wishes of the majority of his constituents. He afterwards received some legal promotion, and he never again represented the University.

The Catholic bishops appear to have been unanimous in favour of the Union, and in the recess of 1799 they exerted themselves strenuously, persistently, and on the whole successfully, in supporting it. In July the Catholic Archbishop of Cashel wrote to Archbishop Troy, expressing his decided good wishes for the measure, and promising to exert his influence 'discreetly' in the counties of Tipperary and Waterford, to procure the signatures of respectable Catholics to an address in its favour. He complained, however, that the bishops had little political influence over this class, and feared that if he took a too prominent action, it might rather injure than serve the cause.[2] In the course of the summer, Lord Cornwallis received strong declarations in favour of the Union from bodies of Catholics, in both Waterford and Kilkenny, and he wrote that, 'as the clergy of that Church, particularly the superiors, countenance the measure, it is likely to extend itself.'[3]

Archbishop Troy was indefatigable in procuring signatures to addresses, and in urging his brother prelates to depart from the neutrality which they appear at first to have desired to maintain. Dr. Moylan, the Bishop of Cork, was in the close confidence of the Government, and he spent some days with the Duke of Portland at Bulstrode.[4] 'Nothing, in my opinion,' he wrote in September, 'will more effectually tend to lay those disgraceful and scandalous party feuds and dissensions, and restore peace and harmony amongst us, than the great measure in contempla-

[1] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, iii. pp. 229, 230. In the beginning of 1799, the electors of Trinity College (who consisted of the Fellows and scholars) addressed their members, calling on them to oppose the Union. (*Faulkner's Journal*, Jan. 19, 1799.)

[2] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, ii. 344, 345.

[3] Ibid. p. 352.

[4] Ibid. pp. 370, 371.

tion, of the legislative Union, and incorporation of this kingdom with Great Britain. I am happy to tell you it is working its way, and daily gaining ground on the public opinion. Several counties which appeared most averse to it have now declared for it, and I have no doubt but, with the blessing of God, it will be effected, notwithstanding the violent opposition of Mr. Foster and his party. . . . The Roman Catholics in general are avowedly for the measure. In the South, where they are the most numerous, they have declared in its favour, and I am sure they will do the same in the other parts of the kingdom, unless overawed (as I know they are in some counties) by the dread of the powerful faction that opposes it.' He believed that all 'seeds of disaffection' would be removed, if the religious disabilities were repealed at or immediately after the Union, and if, in addition to the provision which was intended for the Catholic clergy, measures were taken to abolish the gross abuses which existed in the collection of tithes.[1]

The Catholic Archbishop of Tuam, though in favour of the Union, at first shrank from taking an active part in a political movement, but the advice of Archbishop Troy and of the Catholic Archbishop of Armagh decided him. He signed an address, and soon after he wrote, 'I feel myself each day less shy in declaring my sentiments and wishes relative to the Union. I have had an opportunity in the course of the parochial visitation of this diocese, which is nearly finished, of observing how little averse the public mind is to that measure; and I have also had an opportunity of acquiring the strongest conviction, that this measure alone can restore harmony and happiness to our unhappy country.'[2] Bishop Caulfield, who had more experience than any other bishop of the horrors which had desolated Ireland during the last few months, presided over a great Catholic meeting in favour of the Union at Wexford, at which an address was prepared which received more than 3,000 signatures.[3] Through the instrumentality of the priests, several other purely Catholic addresses in favour of the Union were obtained,[4] and Lord Cornwallis firmly believed that, although the numerical majority of

[1] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, ii. 399–402.

[2] Ibid. pp. 347, 348, 386, 387.

[3] Plowden, ii. Appendix, pp. 320–322.

[4] Ibid. p. 323.

the Catholics might be indifferent or seditious, the preponderance of opinion in the guiding, educated, and respectable portion of that body was in favour of his policy. 'The Union,' he wrote in November, 'is, I trust, making progress; the great body of the people in general, and of the Catholics in particular, are decidedly for it;' and in begging the Government to permit the Catholic peers to vote for the representative peers, he urged that a refusal would be peculiarly ungracious 'at a time when a respectable part of the Roman Catholic community in this kingdom is almost universally coming forward in favour of the Union.'[1] Among the supporters of the Union was Arthur O'Leary, the most brilliant writer of the Irish Catholics. He boasted that he had reconciled many to it, and he predicted that it would put an end to all religious disqualifications and national jealousies, and would close for ever 'the tumultuary scenes' by which Ireland had been hitherto distracted.[2]

In the strange irony of Irish history, few things are more curious than the fact that it was the English Government which persuaded the Catholic priests to take an active part in Irish politics, and to take part in them for the purpose of carrying the legislative Union. They were not in all places successful. Many Catholics, refusing to act as a separate body, signed addresses with the Protestants against the Union. Lord Castlereagh sent to the Catholic Bishop of Meath, as he probably did to the other bishops, a sketch of the address which he wished to be signed; but the Bishop answered that, though he himself fully approved of it, and though the whole body of his priesthood agreed with him, the lay Catholics of Meath were 'too near Dublin, and too much accustomed to listen to the opinions of the Protestants of Meath, to be as yet willing to declare in favour of the Union;' and that till this had ceased to be the case, a dependent priesthood did not dare to take an open or active part.[3]

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 143, 146.

[2] O'Leary's 'Address to the Parliament of Great Britain.' (*Collected Works* (Boston, 1868), p. 541.)

[3] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, ii. 437, 438. Some later letters from General Barnett describe the services of this bishop. 'The Admiral having expressed to me on Thursday last, a particular wish that Dr. Plunkett should come forward, I last night received authority from the Doctor to assure your Lordship, that the measure of Union shall receive his decided support. . . . Your Lordship has full power to make use of Dr. Plunkett's name in any way that you may consider is most conducive to the furtherance of the measure. The

In Dublin, Cornwallis acknowledged that the utmost he could hope from the Catholics was neutrality, and it is tolerably certain that this neutrality was not obtained. It is said that here also the clergy and a proportion of respectable Catholics were in favour of the Union, but the bulk of the Dublin Catholics appear to have still adhered to the convictions so emphatically expressed by the great meeting in Francis Street in 1795. In a very important Catholic meeting which was now held in the Exchange, resolutions were unanimously passed, describing an Union as the extinction of the liberty of Ireland, attributing the unexampled rapidity of the improvement of Ireland during the last twenty years entirely to the Constitution of 1782, and denouncing, as a gross calumny on the Catholic body, the imputation that they could be induced, by either 'pique or pretension,' to sacrifice the independence of their country. It was on this occasion that Daniel O'Connell made his first appearance on a public platform. In a remarkable passage, which was probably elicited by Canning's threat that it might be necessary to re-enact the penal code if the Union were defeated, he declared that the Catholics of Ireland would rather accept that code, and throw themselves on the mercy of their Protestant brethren, than assent to the extinction of the Legislature of their country, and seek advantages as a sect, which would destroy them as a nation.[1]

A few other distinctively Catholic addresses were drawn up in different parts of the country, protesting against the Union, and against the assertion that it was favoured by the Catholics.[2] Much indeed may be truly said to qualify the importance of the Catholic demonstrations in its support. Extreme want of moral courage, and extreme susceptibility to external influences, have always prevailed in Ireland, and the combined pressure of a

Doctor particularly requests that all his clergy should sign, and, with prudence, exert their utmost influence to forward the measure.' . . . 'He will write to the clergy of Westmeath to give support to the measure. . . . He believes the whole of the clergy in this county to be in favour of the measure.' (General Barnett to the Earl of Longford, Jan. 6, 1800; to Admiral Pakenham, Dec. 22, 1799. I.S.P.O.)

[1] Plowden, ii. 980-983. Plowden says: 'Some difficulties arose in the way of the meeting, from the military, but were removed the moment his Excellency Marquis Cornwallis became acquainted with the attempt made to prevent an expression of the popular opinion on a question big with the fate of the popular interests.'

[2] They will be found in Barnes *On the Union.*

Government which had so much to give in this world, and of a priesthood which was believed to have so much influence over the next, was enormously great. It is indeed surprising that, with such a weight of influence, the signatures in favour of the Union were so few. It appears also to be generally admitted, that the Catholics looked mainly, in their approval of the Union, to Catholic objects, or were actuated by very natural feelings of resentment or panic. If they could have obtained their emancipation in an Irish Parliament, they would have preferred it, but with the revival of a fierce Protestant spirit that had followed the rebellion, and with the formal assurance they had received, that the English Government were resolved, for all time, to exercise their overwhelming influence to prevent the introduction of Catholics into an Irish Legislature, the Union seemed the only path of hope. The hatred and the humiliation which recent events had produced, continued unabated, and large districts were still convulsed by all the violence, tyranny, and panic of military licence. Cornwallis wrote in November, that martial law in Ireland was only too likely to pass into a tyranny 'more violent and intolerable' than that of Robespierre; 'that the vilest informers were hunted out from the prisons, to attack, by the most barefaced perjury, the lives of all who are suspected of being, or of having been disaffected,' and that 'every Roman Catholic of influence was in great danger.'[1] The fact that the Lord Lieutenant, who was attempting to carry the Union, had steadily laboured to restrain this violence, and had incurred great unpopularity in doing so; the fact that the Orange party were in general vehement opponents of the Union, and the strong reason the Catholics already had to believe that their emancipation would be one of the first acts of the United Parliament, all influenced their judgments. Their priests had good grounds for expecting that a Government endowment would speedily be granted to them, and they were assured that the conduct of the Catholics in the crisis that had arisen would be decisive of their future advantages.[2]

An approval which was so largely provisional, and which rested so much on transient and abnormal conditions, could not

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 145.
[2] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, iii. 85.

be greatly counted on, though if a wise and liberal statesmanship had followed the Union, it might perhaps have been rendered permanent. Still, it appears to me to be impossible to review with candour the facts that I have collected, in this and the preceding chapter, without arriving at the conclusion that the Union in 1800 was not in any of its stages positively distasteful to the great body of the Irish Catholics, and that a very important section of them, including their whole hierarchy, the vast majority of their landed gentry, and many if not most of their lower priests, decidedly and consistently favoured it. Contemporary historians on both sides support this conclusion. The Catholic historian Plowden was in favour of the Union, and he writes, that although the great body of Roman Catholics at first kept themselves back upon the question, and although some highly respectable members of the communion were warm anti-Unionists, yet 'a very great preponderancy in favour of the Union existed in the Catholic body, particularly in their nobility, gentry, and clergy.'[1] The Protestant historian Barrington was violently on the other side, and his judgment differs but little as to the fact. 'Nothing,' he writes, 'could be more culpable than the conduct of a considerable portion of the Catholic clergy.' Speaking of the Catholics as a whole, he says, 'No body of men ever gave a more helping hand to their own degradation and misery.' 'The Bishops Troy, Lanigan, and others, deluded by the Viceroy, sold their country.' He says, indeed, that 'the great body of Catholics were true to their

[1] Plowden, ii. 979, 980. In quoting Plowden in favour of the Union, I refer to his *Historical Review*, published in 1803. In his *History of Ireland, from the Union to* 1810, which was published in 1811, his point of view was wholly changed, and he wrote as the most furious of partisans. A single passage will serve as a specimen: 'The public can be now no longer duped by the insidious practices of Mr. Pitt's systematic management of Ireland. Every page of her post-Union history teems with evidence of his having forced a rebellion, in order to drown her independence in the blood, and bury her felicity under the ashes, of the country, in the wicked (perhaps fruitless) hope of preventing her resurrection by the immovable tombstone of legislative Union. . . . With a view to raise an eternal bar to Catholic concession, he introduced an apparent system of justice and conciliation, to furnish an argument that the Catholics might be happy and prosperous, as he foresaw they would be tranquil and loyal, without emancipation. At the same time, he secretly laboured to establish, strengthen, and perpetuate the Orange societies, which he well knew to be incompatible with, and essentially destructive of the peace, concord, and prosperity of the country. In that work of deception, Mr. Pitt's prime and most efficient instrument was Marquis Cornwallis' (i. 94).

country,' but he immediately adds, 'the rebellion had terrified them from every overt act of opposition.'[1]

Even among the rebel party, delight at the humiliation of the triumphant loyalists was thought by many to be the strongest feeling. The overtures which some Orangemen made to the Catholics, to join with them in defence of the national Legislature, had little or no result. One of the leading United Irishmen is said to have been the author of a song which was at this time circulated, in which the rebels were represented as scornfully repudiating these overtures, reminding the Orangemen how lately their favourite tune had been 'Croppies, lie down,' and predicting, with evident gratification, that Orangeman and Croppy would now be reduced to the same insignificance.[2] A great Kilkenny landlord writes from that county in July 1799, 'The rebels and papists—I am sorry to say the terms are almost synonymous—perceive there is no hope in rebellion, and that death and ruin pursue those who try it. They will continue, therefore, peaceable, I believe, and are now become great friends to Union; partly through malice, partly through fear; no matter, they everywhere come forward in favour of the measure; and I am happy to say several counties, Cork, Kerry, Mayo, Waterford, have declared strongly and almost unanimously in favour of it.'[3]

In the recess of 1799, Ireland lost a true patriot, who had for a short time played a leading and very honourable part in her

[1] Barrington's *Rise and Fall of the Irish Nation*, chapters xxvi. and xxvii.

[2] *Dialogue between Orange and Croppy*, by Counsellor Sampson. This poem was found in manuscript among the papers of one of the United Irishmen, and sent to the Government. It is printed in Madden's *Literary Remains of the United Irishmen of* 1798, pp. 122, 123. A few lines will indicate its character:

'Says Orange to Crop: "Let us quarrel no more,
But unite and shake hands. Let discord be o'er.
Let the Orange and Blue intermixed with the Green,
In our hats and our bosoms henceforward be seen.
An Union with Croppies for me!"

'"I care not," says Croppy, "not I, by my soul,
Whether English or Orangemen Ireland control.
If tyrants oppress this unfortunate land,
'Tis all but the work of the Orangeman's hand.
No Orange alliance for me!

'"You remember the time when each village and town
Most gaily resounded with 'Croppies, lie down!'
Billy Pitt changed the note, and cries,
'Down with them all—
Down Croppy, down Orange, down great and down small.'
Ah, that was the way to be free!"'

[3] Lord Clifden. (*Diary and Correspondence of Lord Colchester*, i. 186.)

history. The weak health of Lord Charlemont had of late been rapidly declining, and he died on August 4. He was a man, in his best days, more eminent for his accomplishments than for his abilities; and a politician who had no great strength of will, no power of debate, and a constitutional hatred of violence and extravagance, was not likely long to retain his ascendency in the wild and stormy element in which his lot was cast. A great property and position in the district where the volunteer movement was strongest, and the friendship of Flood and Grattan, placed him in the front rank of Irish politics, and the transparent disinterestedness of his public life, the soundness and moderation of his judgment, and the readiness with which he was always prepared to devote time, labour, and money to the public good, established his position. In one critical moment his services both to Ireland and to the Empire had been transcendently great, but his influence speedily waned, and Irish politics drifted far from the path which he had chosen. On the Catholic question, events appear to have somewhat modified his opinion. That 'chord of wondrous potency' which, like Flood, he had feared to wake, had been swept by no skilful hand,[1] and in his last years, Charlemont was convinced that the completion of the Act of 1793 by the admission of Catholics to Parliament, had become absolutely necessary. He had long predicted and dreaded the impending Union, and his hostility was not diminished as it approached. 'It would, more than any other measure,' he wrote, 'contribute to the separation of two countries, the perpetual connection of which was one of the warmest wishes of my heart.'[2]

The probable effect of the measure was differently judged by Lewins, who, though bitterly attacked by many of his fellow-conspirators, still represented the United Irishmen at Paris. Shortly after the Revolution of the 18th brumaire, he sent to the French Government a remarkable memoir, urging that if France allowed the Union to be accomplished, it would add enormously to the power of her great enemy. It would have a

[1] 'I am frightened about the popery business. It ought to be touched only by a master hand. It is a chord of such wondrous potency, that I dread the sound of it, and believe with you that the harmony would be better, if, like that of the spheres, it were, at least for a time, inaudible.' (Flood to Charlemont, Jan. 7, 1782.)

[2] Hardy's *Life of Charlemont*, ii. 414, 416, 429, 430.

greater effect than the Scotch Union, for Ireland was much more valuable than Scotland. It would strengthen the Executive, for the Irish members would be mere creatures of the Government. It would increase the national credit, by adding Irish wealth to the security of the British national debt. It would place the military resources of Ireland without reserve at the disposal of the British Ministers, and it would induce the Irish to believe that they had been abandoned by France, and that their true interest was to identify themselves with England.[1] Lewins was hardly more disappointed at the failure of the rebellion, than at the religious spirit, so hostile to the original intentions of the United Irishmen, which had been aroused. He sent over an agent named O'Mealey to England, and with the intention of going to Ireland to communicate with the rebels; but, with the usual felicity of Irish conspirators, O'Mealey and another United Irishman who was engaged with him in the same mission, seem to have become bosom friends with a spy of the English Government, who reported all their proceedings. From these reports, and from some other sources, the Ministers received assurances that no rebellion was likely to occur unless a French invasion took place, but that such an invasion was eagerly looked forward to.[2]

The disturbances in the country came and went, like the passing storms that sweep so rapidly over the inconstant Irish sky, but on the whole they appear to have been somewhat less than in the last few years. The measure imposing martial law, which has been noticed, was speedily carried; but in May, Castlereagh still speaks of the horrible houghing of cattle in Clare and Galway; of outrages of banditti due to some agrarian quarrel in Meath; of isolated but much exaggerated outrages in Armagh and Antrim.[3] At the end of June he writes, 'The tranquillity of the country continues perfectly undisturbed, and the minds of the people appear more settled than I have known them for several years. They have suffered for their crimes. Industry never was so profitable, and the departure of the Brest fleet for the Mediterranean is considered by the disaffected such

[1] *Memoir of Thompson*, 26 primaire, an viii. (F.F.O.)

[2] Reports in the I.S.P.O., July 24, Dec. 5, 1799.

[3] Castlereagh to Wickham, May 6, 1799. (R.O.)

an abdication of their cause as leaves them no other choice but submission, at least for the present.' The revenue was rising. 'The quarter ending June 24, 1799, exceeds the corresponding quarter of the preceding year nearly 200,000*l.*, and compared with the same period of 1797, has risen above 350,000*l.*, an increase principally to be attributed to the superior productiveness of the old taxes, particularly the excise.'[1] Two months later he writes, 'Although no very serious symptoms appeared, yet in many parts of Ireland the approach of the enemy's fleet towards our coast has produced a movement among the lower orders.'[2] Cornwallis, in his journey through the South of Ireland, had been much encouraged by the tranquil and prosperous aspect of the country through which he passed. In September he writes, 'The southern part of this wretched island is again getting into a bad state, no doubt from encouragement received from France. The counties of Waterford and Tipperary are reported to be in a state of preparation for an immediate rising.' He expressed his own astonishment at the suddenness of the change, but added that the spirit of disaffection was so deeply rooted in the minds of the people of Ireland, that it would require time and a total change in the system and constitution of the Government to eradicate it.[3] The Opposition declared that the attempt to force on the Union, had greatly contributed to these disturbances. The Government believed that it had little or nothing to do with them; that the mass of the people were perfectly indifferent to the Union, but that they hated England and their landlords, and waited eagerly for a French invasion.[4]

[1] Castlereagh to Portland, June 29, 1799.

[2] Castlereagh to King, Aug. 21, 1799. 'It is too provoking,' Lord Clare wrote very characteristically at this time, 'that the old bitch, Lord Keith, should have let the French and Spanish fleets slip him as they have done. Most probably he will be advanced to the English peerage for the exploit.' (Clare to Cooke, Aug. 13, 1799. I.S.P.O.)

[3] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 130, 132.

[4] Ibid. iii. 93. 'As to the present tendency to rebellion . . . I cannot bring myself to believe that it has anything to do with the question of Union, as the anti-Unionists in the country would fain make us believe. No one who knows anything of the country, or of the nature and principle of the insurrection, could ever bring himself to believe in November or December last that the whole was at an end. The question of Union may, perhaps, have hastened the new organisation of the counties of Down and Antrim of which you speak, but I am far from thinking myself that this is an evil, being persuaded that the seeds of insurrection are lurking in every county, and that the sooner they bear fruit . . . the better.' (Wickham to Cooke, March 4, 1799. I.S.P.O.)

The harvest of 1799 proved extremely bad, and this greatly aggravated the situation. The Government acted with much energy. They at once prohibited absolutely the exportation of corn and potatoes, accompanying the measure by a bounty on the importation of flour, and by proclamations forbidding the making of cakes, rolls, muffins, or anything but household bread. An Act of Parliament was soon after passed, forbidding for a certain time the consumption of barley or other corn in making malt, or distilling spirits. These measures prevented absolute famine, but there was much distress with its accompanying disturbances, and there were the usual complaints of frauds by millers and corn factors.[1]

The period seemed a strangely inauspicious one for pressing on a great constitutional change, which Irish opinion had certainly not demanded. But in the eyes of the English Government, there is little doubt that the very tension and anarchy and panic that prevailed, formed the strongest ground for their policy. An elaborate paper of arguments for the Union, which may be found in the Castlereagh Correspondence, concentrates with great force and frankness reasons which we have already seen scattered or implied in many speeches and pamphlets. The writer recalls, in a melancholy historical retrospect, the past relations of the two countries. The earliest period had been well described by Sir John Davies. 'Too weak to introduce order and obedience, the English authority was yet sufficient to check the growth of any enterprising genius amongst the natives; and though it could bestow no true form of civil government, it was able to prevent the rise of any such form.' The conquests of Elizabeth introduced a long period of English supremacy, but also of persistent English jealousy of Irish progress. 'Should we exert ourselves,' said her councillors, 'in reducing this country to order and civility, it must soon acquire power, consequence, and rule. The inhabitants will then be alienated from England. They will cast themselves into the arms of some foreign Power, and perhaps erect themselves into an independent State.'[2] 'Such,' continued

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 144. There are some good letters, on the distress and frauds of the time, by Higgins in the I.S.P.O. The distillery laws were 40 Geo. III. c. 6, 58.

[2] The reader will remember the great influence which this statement, in Leland, had exercised over Arthur O'Connor's politics.

the writer, 'were the counsels that then made their way into the British Cabinet, and we can entertain little doubt of their having operated to the present time.' This was the policy which inspired the destruction of the Irish woollen manufactures under William, lest they should rival those of England, and it was shown equally in other ways. Without a navy, islands can neither secure their trade nor their liberty. 'Above a hundred years ago, Ireland made a perpetual grant for the support of an Irish marine. This England never permitted to be applied, because she wished to have the monopoly of the navy herself.'

Nor was this surprising, for a half-separated Ireland always had been, and always would be, a danger to England. The writer recalled how it had aggravated the peril of English internal contests in the days of Perkin Warbeck, in the Great Rebellion and in the Revolution, and how often both France and Spain had seen in Ireland the best vantage ground for attacking England. A long period of peace and quiescence had followed the Revolution, but the experience of the independent Parliament which Ireland had at last won, all pointed to ultimate separation. 'Both the Parliament and people of Ireland have, for the last seventeen years, been almost entirely engaged in lessening by degrees their dependence on Great Britain. . . . It signifies nothing to say that their views were honourable and patriotic. . . . This may be readily acknowledged, and yet the effect of all these patriotic exertions be the same, viz. that the connection between the two countries is reduced by them almost to a single thread, the unity of the executive power and a negative on the laws passed in the Irish Parliament. Should this negative be exercised on any important occasion, the two countries are unavoidably committed. . . . I do not say that the present members of the Irish Legislature are at all inclined to come to these extremities. Their conduct has been in the highest degree loyal, and their attachment to England sincere. But who can answer for their successors?' 'A vast majority of the inhabitants of Ireland are either rebels or inclined to become so. A great majority, again, of these rebels are Catholics, inimical for the most part, on that score alone, to the existing Government. . . . A great many among the lower orders of the northern Dissenters are inclined to join with them in their

attempt to overthrow the Constitution, or at least to introduce democratic reform. . . . The object of the disaffected, that is the great majority of the numbers at least of this island, is confessedly a separation from Great Britain.' 'The Catholic claims will soon be renewed with redoubled force.' With the power and numbers and present disposition of the Catholics, the rejection of those claims 'would be a measure attended with the greatest national danger.' Their admission would be at least equally dangerous, and if, as was probable, it was followed by a democratic reform, making Parliament the true representative of a disaffected people, there could be no real doubt of the result. 'Indeed, it can hardly be conceived how the Roman Catholics in this country could be admitted to a full participation in political power, and the two countries continue connected as they are at present. A Protestant country and a papist country united under a Protestant monarch, who by his coronation oath was bound to maintain the Protestant religion, would be a political monster whose life must indeed be of short duration.' If the Catholic question is left to an Irish Parliament, however it may be treated, it must lead either to fresh insurrection or to a final separation from England.

It is on these grounds that the writer maintained that a legislative Union was the only means of averting an ultimate, and indeed a speedy, separation of the two islands, and he contended that the present was the only moment in which it could be carried. A little earlier, no possible inducement would have made an Irish Parliament accept it. A little later, it would be equally impossible. 'The moment is now come, and it will never occur again, when an Union may be practicable. The leading men in Ireland, who were most unfriendly to it, find that neither their property nor the country is safe, and now wish for Union. The measure should be despatched while men's minds are impressed with the present horrid state of Ireland, and while the agitators are kept down by the discovery and failure of their plots.' [1]

These were, I believe, the true reasons that governed the conduct of the English Ministers. In the mind of Lord Cornwallis the advantage the Catholics were likely to obtain from

[1] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, iii. 26–54.

the measure, occupied perhaps even a larger place. He was convinced that without an Union, Ireland would not long be a part of the Empire; but he was convinced also, that it could enjoy no internal peace or permanent content, unless the Government of the country was taken out of the hands of the men who had triumphed in the civil war. As we have already seen, he had been long since convinced that Catholic emancipation was the only solution of Irish troubles. He knew nothing of what Ireland had been during the tranquil period before 1795, and coming over to a country of which he was very ignorant, at the moment when it was convulsed by the agonies and the anarchy of a most ferocious civil war; when appalling dangers, and no less appalling barbarities, had revived and inflamed all the old hatred of creeds and classes and races, he believed that the existing system of government had hopelessly broken down, and that the very first condition of security, prosperity, and civilisation was to place the government of Ireland in the hands of an impartial and unimpassioned Legislature. Very reluctantly he yielded to the representations of the English Ministers, that it was impossible to carry Catholic emancipation concurrently with the Union, but he hoped that this measure would speedily follow, and he anticipated the best results from taking the government of the country out of the hands of a loyalist class, who were now deeply tinged with Orange passions. The Union, in his eyes, was carried against this class, for the benefit of the Catholics, with their approval, and in a large measure by their assistance.

We have seen how he hated the corruption which he was compelled to practise. Lord Castlereagh, on the other hand, pursued his course with a quiet, business-like composure; nor is there the slightest indication that it caused him a momentary uneasiness. He was convinced that it was the necessary means to a necessary measure, and he believed that he was corrupting to purify. He described his task and that of Lord Cornwallis as 'to buy out, and secure to the Crown for ever, the fee simple of Irish corruption, which has so long enfeebled the powers of Government and endangered the connection.'[1]

He seems to have had no scruples about his proceedings, and if the approbation of men who, by their characters or their

[1] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, iii. 333.

positions, might be deemed patterns of religious sanctity, could have encouraged him, this encouragement was not wanting. All the heads of the Catholic Church, and nearly all the heads of the Established Church in Ireland, approved of what he was doing. In England, Wilberforce expressed serious alarm at the effects the Union might have on the English woollen manufactures and on the composition of the British Parliament, but he does not appear to have expressed the smallest disapprobation of the manner in which it was carried. Alexander Knox was the private secretary of Castlereagh, and one of the warmest of his admirers, and it is a remarkable fact that Castlereagh afterwards asked this very distinguished religious writer to undertake a history of the Union.[1]

In the mean time, most of the country was proclaimed, and English troops were streaming in. In July there were rather more than 45,000 effective soldiers in Ireland, in addition to artillery, but in the autumn the army was largely reinforced, and there was at one time a strange notion of sending over a large body of subsidised Russians. It was rejected because Cornwallis and Castlereagh represented the extremely bad effect it would have on public opinion during the Union crisis;[2] but the force that was in Ireland was soon so great, that unless a strong foreign army was landed, it seemed irresistible.

It was under these circumstances that the last session of the Irish Parliament was opened on January 15, 1800. The speech from the Throne was long and elaborate, but it did not contain the faintest allusion to the momentous question which now filled all thoughts, and which the Government had determined by all the means in their power to press on to an immediate solution. It seems a strange reticence, but it may be easily ex-

[1] See Castlereagh's remarkable letter in Alexander Knox's *Remains*, iv. 539–541. In this letter Castlereagh says: 'I feel confident that the intentions of Government for the public good, at that time, will bear the strictest scrutiny. . . . I believe their measures, when fairly explained, will stand equally the test of criticism, and that they may be shown to have combined humanity with vigour of administration, when they had to watch over the preservation of the State; whilst in the conduct of the Union, they pursued honestly the interests of Ireland, yielding not more to private interests than was requisite to disarm so mighty a change of any convulsive character.' Knox said Castlereagh was 'the honestest and perhaps the ablest statesman that has been in Ireland for a century. I know of him what the world does not and cannot know, and what if it did know, it would probably not believe.' (Ibid. p. 31.)

[2] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 118, 137, 138, 145.

plained. The process of remodelling the borough representation by substituting supporters for opponents of the Union, had been undertaken, and in the first four days of the session, no less than thirty-nine writs were moved.[1] As the great majority of the vacant seats had been secured by the Government, Lord Castlereagh had an obvious reason for adjourning all discussion of the Union till they were filled, but the same reason impelled the Opposition to press it on without delay. Sir Lawrence Parsons, having first directed the Clerk to read the speeches in which Lord Cornwallis, in opening and closing the last session, had declared the firm resolution of the Government to carry the Union, moved an amendment to the Address, expressing the deep loyalty of the House of Commons to the Throne, to the connection, and to the free Constitution of 1782, and at the same time pledging it 'at all times, and particularly at the present moment,' to maintain an independent resident Parliament. Reminding the House that Pitt had repeatedly postponed the parliamentary reform which he had once advocated, on the plea that a period of war and disturbance was not one for introducing great constitutional changes, he accused the Government of endeavouring to destroy the independence of Ireland at a time when the spirit of the people was depressed by recent troubles, when the country was occupied by an enormous army, when martial law prevailed and a formidable invasion was threatened, and when apprehensions from without and from within made all free exercise of the public mind upon the question impossible. He urged that it was the duty of the members to deal with the question at once, and not to sit supinely there, while the Minister of the Crown was openly engaged in prostituting the prerogative of appointing to places, for the purpose of packing the Parliament. 'A string of men who are against the Union are to go out, that a string of men who are for it may come in.'

The debate which ensued extended through the whole night, and lasted for not less than eighteen hours.[2] It appears to have

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 164.

[2] The best report of Lord Castlereagh's speech is, I believe, that in Seward's *Collectanea Politica*. See, too, the reports in Coote's *History of the Union*. A fuller report of this debate was published separately in Dublin, but it is now extremely rare. Long extracts from some of the Opposition speeches will, however, be found in Grattan's *Life*

been one of the fiercest ever heard in a legislative assembly. Lord Castlereagh met the rising storm with great courage and composure. He acknowledged that, although there was no mention of the Union in the speech from the Throne, it was intended to be the chief measure of the session. It had been determined, he said, to make a separate communication on the subject, and when that communication was made, the time would have come for discussing it. Last year the measure had been withdrawn because it was not yet fully understood, 'and it was stated that it would not again be proposed without full and fair notice, and until there was reason to believe that the Parliament and the country had changed their opinions upon the subject.' That change had, he believed, taken place. He was fully satisfied, that the measure 'was now approved by a great majority of the people.' 'Nineteen of the most considerable counties in Ireland, constituting above five-sevenths of the kingdom,' had declared themselves in favour of it. The amendment of Parsons was not to reject the Union after mature investigation, but to extinguish the question by anticipation, refusing all information, and doing so at a time when a great number of the members of the House were indispensably absent. Could it be supposed that his Majesty would desist from the measure because the Parliament of Ireland, thus circumstanced, had declined to consider it? Was it, he asked, amid the derisive laughter of the Opposition, decent to press forward this discussion when there were so many gentlemen absent who had accepted places under Government? Was it, he repeated, constitutional or right to proceed to the determination of so important a subject, when so large a proportion of their body was absent—to refuse even to consider a measure of which so large a part of the kingdom had expressed their approbation?

On the other side, the language of Opposition soon passed into the fiercest invective. It was denied emphatically and repeatedly, that there was any truth in the statement that the sense of the nation was in favour of the Union, and it was asserted that what semblance of support the Minister had obtained, had been obtained by the basest means. 'During the whole interval between the sessions, the most barefaced system of parliamentary corruption had been pursued—dismissals, pro-

motions, threats, promises.' 'Bribes had been promised to the Catholic and to the Presbyterian clergy. Irreconcilable and delusive hopes had been alternately held out to the Catholics and the Protestants. Agents of great absentee proprietors had gone among the tenantry, obtaining signatures by refusing leases to those who hesitated to sign; threatening to call in the rent to the hour; holding over them the terrors of an ejectment. Revenue officers had been employed to canvass the obscurest villages. Signatures had been sought in the very dregs of the population, it was said even in the gaols. The whole patronage of the Crown was employed to favour the measure; the powers of martial law were made use of to stifle opposition, and the Viceroy himself had gone from county to county seeking support. And the result of all this was, that out of a population of nearly five millions, the Government had obtained 'about 5,000 signatures, three-quarters of whom affixed their names in surprise, terror, and total ignorance of the subject;'[1] that they had nowhere ventured to call on the sheriffs legally to convene the counties, and collect the unbiassed sense of the intelligent portion of the community; that their measure had so little genuine support, that they did not dare to announce it in the speech from the Throne.

Language of this kind, in the mouths of such orators as Plunket, Bushe, George Ponsonby, Fitzgerald, and Arthur Moore,

[1] This is the statement of Plunket, and the figures he gave do not appear to have been disputed in the debate. Grattan's biographer, who reports the speech, says that the signatures to the addresses in favour of the Union did not exceed 7,000. (Grattan's *Life*, v. 79.) On the other hand, Plowden says the Wexford address was signed by more than 3,000, and the Leitrim address by 1,836 persons. (ii. Appendix, 322, 323.) An address from Roscommon is said to have been signed by '1,500 Catholics exclusive of Protestants.' (*Castlereagh Correspondence*, iii. 222.) The number of signatures in favour of the Union is not, I think, anywhere mentioned in the Government letters, but Castlereagh wrote: 'The petitions presented to Parliament [against the Union] have been more numerously signed than the addresses and declarations in favour of the measure, which were, in general, studiously confined to a superior description of persons; but the preponderance of property is undoubtedly on the side of the latter.' (*Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 224.) Everything that can be said by a skilful advocate to enhance the importance of the addresses in favour of the Union, and to diminish the importance of the petitions against it, will be found in Mr. Ingram's *History of the Irish Union* —a book which is intended to show that 'the Irish Union is free from any taint of corruption;' 'that it was carried by fair and constitutional means, and that its final accomplishment was accompanied with the hearty assent and concurrence of the vast majority of the two peoples that dwell in Ireland.' (Preface.)

was well fitted to inflame the country, whatever effect it might have upon the House, and speaker after speaker warned the Government, that if the Union was carried by such means and at such a time, it would not be acquiesced in, and would hereafter lead to generations of disloyalty, agitation, and strife.

This debate, among other things, was very memorable for the reappearance of Grattan on the scene of his ancient triumphs. For some time he had been prostrated by a severe nervous disorder, peculiarly fitted to incapacitate him from mixing in the agitations of public life, and all that had of late been taking place in Ireland had strengthened his wish to retire completely from it. He had returned from the Isle of Wight at the end of 1799, and had refused, on the ground of his shattered health, an invitation to stand for Parliament; but the crisis was now so acute, that his friends and family urged that it was his duty at all hazards to appear, and he at last with extreme reluctance consented. One of the members for the nomination borough of Wicklow had just died; the seat was purchased; the election was hurried through on the night of January 15, and early on the following morning, while the House was still sitting, Grattan entered. He wore the uniform of the volunteers. He was so weak, that he was supported to his seat by George Ponsonby and Arthur Moore, and when, having taken the oath, he rose to speak, he was obliged to ask the permission of the House to speak sitting. For a few moments it seemed as if it would be an idle display, for his voice was so feeble that it was almost inaudible; but the excitement of the occasion and of the scene, and the fire of a great orator, soon asserted their power, and the old eloquence which had so often dazzled the House, kindled into all its pristine splendour. His speech—the first of a series which are among the most memorable monuments of Irish eloquence—lasted for nearly two hours, and although it is not probable that it changed votes, it had a deep and lasting effect on the country. The members of the Administration, who hated and dreaded Grattan, described his entry into the House as theatrical; threw doubt upon his illness; believed that the unpopularity which during the last months had gathered round him had destroyed his influence; and when they found that this was not the

case, hoped that Foster might be made jealous, and alienated from the Opposition. But the country judged more wisely and more generously. Men felt the deep pathos of the scene, and the patriotism and genius of the foremost of living Irishmen emerged gradually but steadily from the clouds of calumny that had obscured them.

It was soon, however, apparent that the work of the recess had been accomplished, and that in spite of the vacant seats the Government had an ample majority. At ten o'clock on the morning of the 16th, the amendment was rejected by 138 votes to 96. 'I trust this first success,' wrote Lord Cornwallis, 'will cement our party; it is still composed of loose materials, much more intent on the personal than the public question.'[1] 'All depends on the tone of the country,' wrote Cooke. 'If we can keep that right, I believe all may do well.'[2]

A step was now taken by the Opposition, which was violently denounced by the partisans of the Government, but which, according to all modern notions, was so plainly right that it needs no defence. Castlereagh had asserted that the majority of the country was with him, and the Lord Lieutenant had gone through both the South and North of Ireland for the express purpose of obtaining addresses in favour of the Union. The Opposition now sent through the country a letter which Cornwallis and Clare somewhat absurdly described as a 'consular edict,' stating 'that petitions to Parliament declaring the real sense of the freeholders of the kingdom on the subject of a legislative Union would, at this time, be highly expedient,' and requesting those to whom the circular was sent, to use their influence to have petitions prepared in their several counties without delay. This circular was signed by Lord Downshire; by the new Lord Charlemont, and by W. Ponsonby, the leader of the regular Opposition, and they stated that it was drawn up with the consent, and by the authority, of no less than thirty-eight of the county members.[3]

A hundred thousand pounds was, at the same time, subscribed, or, more probably, promised, by leading members of

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 165.

[2] Cooke to Grenville, Jan. 16, 1800.

[3] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 170, 171. The circular was dated Jan. 20.

the party, and some desperate but manifestly hopeless attempts were made to combat the Government by their own weapons. Two seats, which the Government believed they had secured, were obtained by the Opposition, and Peter Burrowes and Thomas Goold—two able opponents of the Union—were introduced into the House. Saurin was soon after brought in for one of Lord Downshire's boroughs, and other measures of a more than dubious kind were taken. One venal member—a brother-in-law of Lord Clare—who had voted for the Union in 1799, was unquestionably bribed by a sum of 4,000*l.* to vote against it in 1800,[1] and it is stated by Grattan's biographer that another vote was only lost because the money was not forthcoming for another bribe.[2]

In Dublin the feeling was so fierce, that it was impossible to mistake or to misrepresent it. An aggregate meeting, with the Sheriff at its head, presented addresses to both Grattan and Foster. The Guild of Merchants passed resolutions condemning the Union in the strongest terms, calling for a coalition of all sects against it, and offering warm thanks to their Roman Catholic fellow-citizens of Dublin for their manly and patriotic conduct. Cornwallis observed with much concern, that the influence of Grattan over the Dublin Catholics was very great, and that at the same time there were signs of a most alarming kind among the yeomen, who were chiefly Orangemen. Burrowes strongly urged that the Opposition, as a body, should make a formal appeal to them, reminding them that they had sworn to uphold the King, Lords, and Commons of Ireland, and calling on them in virtue of that oath to resist the impending Union. He proposed that this appeal, emanating, in the first place, from the lawyers' corps, should be circulated through every corps in the kingdom. The responsible leaders of the Opposition declined to take a step which might lead to another rebellion, but unauthorised handbills of a most alarming kind appeared. One of them, Cornwallis says, called on the yeomanry, Orangemen, and Catholics, to form a solid and

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 174, 182, 184. Compare Grattan's *Life*, v. 71, 72. The Opposition paid the 4,000*l.* he had paid of election expenses at Enniscorthy, on condition of his voting in 1800 against the Union, which he had supported in 1799. Grattan's son says that Cooke tried to win the member back by a large bribe, but that he refused to break his promise with the Opposition.

[2] Grattan's *Life*, v. 71.

indissoluble bond of opposition to the Union. Another stated that no Government could wrest the Parliament from 60,000 armed and tried men. Should 60,000 Irishmen, it was asked, with arms in their hands, stand tamely by and see the Constitution of their country destroyed?[1] It was noticed that great numbers of yeomen accompanied the procession that went to present an address of thanks to Grattan.[2]

In spite of the resolution in favour of neutrality passed by the Grand Lodge, the Orangemen over a great part of Ireland were straining fiercely, like hounds in the leash. Few things in the history of this period are more curious than the many Orange resolutions protesting against the Union. The Grand Lodge was accused of having betrayed the country, under the influence of a few great placeholders. Representatives of no less than thirty-six lodges assembled at Armagh, declared that it made no material difference whether the Constitution was robbed by open and avowed enemies, or by pretended friends, who were, in reality, the deadliest enemies of the country, and that it was the duty of all Orangemen to stand forward in opposition to the impending measure. The representatives of thirteen Orange lodges in the county of Fermanagh at once echoed this language, and very similar resolutions were passed by many other lodges in different parts of Ireland.[3] A large proportion of the lodges, it is true, obeyed the direction of the Grand Lodge, and kept silence on the subject, and some individual Orangemen were conspicuous supporters of the Union, but there is not, I believe, a single instance of an Orange resolution in its favour.

It is difficult to measure the extent and full significance of the provincial feeling against it. That there was, in large classes, and over large districts, a profound apathy on the subject, is, I believe, perfectly true, and it is not probable that the feeling ran anywhere as high as in Dublin and its neighbourhood, but, at the same time, the response to the circular of the Opposition was very considerable. A great meeting in the county of Down, convoked by Lord Downshire, led the way,

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 167, 168; compare Grattan's *Life*, v. 66–68.

[2] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 165.

[3] See the text of many of these resolutions in Barnes *On the Union*, Appendix, pp. 133, 136, 142; Grattan's *Life*, v. 54–56.

and the example was speedily followed in Louth, Meath, Cavan, and many other counties. At Limerick and at Dundalk, there were distinctively Catholic meetings. In general, the meetings appear to have had no denominational character. In some cases, where the sheriff refused to convene them, private gentlemen undertook the task, and petitions against the Union soon poured in, signed by freeholders and other electors, from nearly all the counties, and from nearly all the principal towns of Ireland. In a confidential letter, dated March 5, Cooke stated that petitions against the Union had come in from twenty-six counties, and bearing 110,000 signatures.[1] There appear to have been, at this time, absolutely no counter demonstrations in favour of the measure.

It is, of course, not to be assumed that all these signatures represented honest, unbiassed, intelligent conviction. Great landlords had, no doubt, often selfish reasons for wishing that the Union should not pass, and they probably sometimes exercised undue pressure upon their tenants.[2] It is said, too, that a report was propagated that when the Parliament was abolished, Irish law would be at an end; that leases would accordingly be broken, and that the reason why so many gentlemen were for the Union was because they wished to relet their estates at advanced rents.[3] Many exaggerated or untrue reports

[1] Cooke to King, March 5, 1800. (R.O.) See, too, *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 203. Barnes has printed a list of the counties and other places that petitioned the House of Commons for or against the Union, extracted from the journals of the House by James Corry, clerk of the journals. According to this list, the petitions against the Union were signed by 112,888 persons. Of these signatures 106,347 were attached to the petitions of the twenty-six counties, and the remainder came from the towns. Six counties sent no petition. Down and Monaghan were the only counties which sent petitions to the House of Commons in favour of the Union, and those petitions were signed by 3,070 persons. The petitions from these two counties against the Union had 28,435 signatures. (Barnes *On the Union*, pp. 139–141.) This list, of course, does not include the addresses for the Union (mentioned on p. 439), which had been presented to the Lord Lieutenant in 1799. Grey is reported to have said in one of his speeches: 'Though there were 707,000 who had signed petitions against the measure, the total number of those who declared themselves in favour of it did not exceed 3,000.' (*Parl. Hist.* xxxv. 60.) These figures have been repeated by many writers, and, I am sorry to say, by myself in my *Leaders of Public Opinion in Ireland*. It is evident from the above-mentioned authorities that 707,000 is a misprint for 107,000, and Mr. Ingram has kindly sent me the result of his own researches, showing that out of seventeen contemporary newspapers or periodicals, fourteen give the latter figures.

[2] See *Castlereagh Correspondence*, iii. 223.

[3] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 176.

were no doubt in the air, and neither corrupt motives nor sincere and strenuous convictions were exclusively on one side, though it is not, I think, very difficult to determine on which side there was the balance of each.

The letters of Lord Cornwallis, in the interval that elapsed between the division of January 16 and the formal introduction of the Union in the House of Commons, indicated a great and growing alarm. In letter after letter he urged, in the strongest terms, that more English troops must immediately be sent over, not now to guard against French invasion, or against the United Irishmen, or against a Catholic rising, but to make it possible to carry the Union without tumult and insurrection. The necessity appeared to him the greater, as a large number of Irish militiamen had been induced by high bounties to volunteer into English regiments. On January 18, he warned the Duke of Portland that dangerous tumults might arise before the Union had gone through all its stages. On the 20th and 21st, he described the inflammatory handbills that were circulating among the yeomen, the efforts of the Opposition to raise popular clamour to the highest pitch, and the urgent necessity for sending over regular troops at once. 'I am not idle,' he said, 'on my part; but my Cabinet friends have shown so total a want of confidence in me, and have so eagerly seized every opportunity of reprobating my conduct in severe, if not acrimonious terms, that I am almost afraid to appeal to the general goodwill of the people at large, which I have the vanity to think I possess.' On the 24th he wrote: 'There can, I think, now be no doubt of our parliamentary success, although I believe that a great number of our friends are not sincere well-wishers to the measure of the Union. . . . In Dublin and its vicinity the people are all outrageous against Union; in the other parts of the kingdom the general sense is undoubtedly in its favour. It is, however, easy for men of influence to obtain resolutions and addresses on either side.' In the last days of January, the situation had become manifestly worse. The county meetings had begun. 'Every engine is at work to irritate the minds of the people, and to carry the opposition to the measure beyond constitutional bounds.' 'The ferment that exists amongst all descriptions of persons in this city is exceeding great.' 'The clamour against the Union is

increasing rapidly, and every degree of violence is to be expected. As none of the English regiments have yet arrived, I have been under the necessity of ordering the Lancashire Volunteers from Youghal to Dublin. . . . The apprehensions of our friends rendered this measure absolutely necessary. The Roman Catholics, for whom I have not been able to obtain the smallest token of favour, are joining the standard of opposition.'[1]

This last sentence was very ominous. It was equally alarming that the pressure of public opinion had begun to tell upon some of the members of Parliament. Lord Oxmantown, who had just returned from the county of Longford, told Lord Cornwallis that he found the sense of the people so adverse to the Union, that the county member who had voted for it in 1799, would now be obliged to oppose it. I have already noticed the defection of one of the members for the county of Tipperary, and of his two sons, which was defended on the same grounds. 'The indefatigable exertions, aided by the subscriptions of the anti-Unionists,' wrote Cornwallis, 'have raised a powerful clamour against the measure in many parts of the kingdom, and have put the capital quite in an uproar, and I am sorry to say some of our unwilling supporters in Parliament have taken advantage of these appearances to decline giving any further support. God only knows how the business will terminate.' 'Several members of the House of Commons have represented to me the ferment which now agitates the public mind, and their personal apprehensions. . . . In the present temper of affairs, I am not prepared to say that dangerous tumults will not arise, . . . and it is with real concern that I express my fears that some defections may take place among those from whom we had a right to expect support.'[2]

There appears to have been for a short time serious fear that the great loyalist yeomanry, who had contributed so largely to the suppression of the rebellion, would resist the Union by arms. This fear, however, was probably exaggerated. Neither Lord Downshire, nor Foster, nor Grattan, gave any countenance to such a policy, and eloquent and ambitious lawyers are not the kind of men who are likely to be leaders in rebellion. The indignation of a great portion of the yeomanry was no doubt extreme, but

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 165–175. [2] Ibid. iii. 176–180.

even if they had drawn the sword, they could not have created a national rebellion. It was impossible on the morrow of a savage civil war, which had kindled the fiercest and most enduring religious hatreds, that the divided parties should have at once passed into new combinations, like the patterns of a kaleidoscope; and neither Catholic Ireland nor Presbyterian Ireland was likely to show much enthusiasm for the defence of the Irish Parliament. On the great question of Catholic emancipation, the opponents of the Union were profoundly divided, and they did not in consequence venture to take the only course that might have given the struggle a national character. If, however, at this critical moment, a French army had landed upon the coast, it may be questioned whether any considerable section of the Irish people would have resisted it.

The Government in the mean time were busily engaged in putting the finishing touches to the Union plan; but the only serious change that was now made, appears to have been in the article relating to the Established Church. It was a leading argument of the supporters of the Union, that by uniting the two Churches, it would secure the Irish Protestants for ever from all danger of the subversion of their establishment. The Archbishop of Cashel, however, insisted that a still further step should be taken; that the maintenance of the Established Church should be made an article of distinct treaty obligation, and should be guaranteed for ever in the most solemn terms as a fundamental portion of the compact under which the Irish Protestant Parliament resigned into the hands of an Imperial Parliament the legislative power of Ireland. The precedent for such a course was to be found in the Scotch Union, when the maintenance of the English and Scotch Churches in the existing forms was made a fundamental and essential condition of the treaty of Union, was declared to be permanent and unalterable, and was placed, as the authors of the Scotch Union believed, outside the sphere of the legislative competence of the United Parliament. It was in accordance with these views that the fifth article of the treaty of Union was drawn up. It laid down 'that the Churches of England and Ireland, as now by law established, be united into one Protestant Episcopal Church, to be called the United Church of England and Ireland; that the doctrine, worship,

discipline, and government of the said United Church shall be, and shall remain in full force for ever, as the same are now by law established for the Church of England; and that the continuance and preservation of the said United Church, as the Established Church of England and Ireland, shall be deemed and taken to be an essential and fundamental part of the Union; and that, in like manner, the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of the Church of Scotland shall remain and be preserved as the same are now established by law, and by the Acts for the union of the two kingdoms of England and Scotland.' [1]

It does not fall within the limits of the present work to trace the later history of opinion on this question. It is sufficient to say that, for at least a generation, the binding force of the Union guarantee was recognised by Parliament, that it was constantly appealed to by the most eminent statesmen, and that when the Catholics were admitted into the Imperial Parliament, a special oath was imposed upon them, binding them in the most solemn terms to disavow and abjure all intention of subverting the Established Church. It was intended, in the words of Sir Robert Peel, to assure the Protestants, 'on the obligation of an oath, that no privilege which the Act confers, would be exercised to disturb or weaken the Protestant religion or the Protestant Government within these realms.' [2] It was impossible, however, that a reservation of this kind could be maintained for ever, and those who watched with sagacity the course and character of party warfare in England, might have easily predicted that if a political leader ever found the destruction of the Irish Church a convenient cry for uniting a party or for displacing a rival, the moral obligation of the Act of Union was not likely to deter him.

On February 5, a message from the Lord Lieutenant was delivered to both Houses of Parliament, recommending on the part of the King in very strong terms a legislative Union, and stating that 'his Majesty had observed with increasing satisfaction that the sentiments which have continued to be manifested in

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 172, 176, 198.

[2] See a most powerful passage on the binding force of the Union guarantee, in Sir Robert Peel's great speech on the Church Establishment in Ireland, April 2, 1835. See, too, a very remarkable speech of Plunket in 1829, Plunket's *Life*, ii. 293–302; and Canning's *Speech* (corrected and published by himself), Feb. 15, 1825.

favour of this important and salutary measure by such numerous and respectable descriptions of his Irish subjects, confirm the hope he had expressed that its accomplishment will prove to be as much the joint wish, as it unquestionably is the common interest, of both his kingdoms.' Immediately after the message had been read, Lord Castlereagh rose to move that it should be taken into consideration, and in a long and very able speech, unfolded and defended the whole scheme. He declared that the more the prospect of a legislative Union had been understood, the more it had gained in favour with those who were most interested in the welfare of the country; that among the members of the two Houses of Parliament, the preponderance of property in its favour was nearly as three to one; that the owners of a very large proportion of property in nineteen counties, including five-sevenths of Ireland, had come forward in its support, and that most of the great commercial towns were on the same side. He acknowledged that hostile dispositions had been exhibited in some counties, but this, he said, was not strange, as the last weeks had witnessed the 'new political phenomenon' of a parliamentary minority who, not content with exercising their deliberative powers within the House, had been employing all their agents 'to bring the mass of the people to its bar as petitioners against the Union.' Such a proceeding Castlereagh deemed both deplorable and reprehensible. Parliament should no doubt 'consult in some measure, for the guidance of its councils, the great majority of those whose stake in the property and the interests of the country give them a fair claim to due consideration.' It should never suffer 'any temporary and artificial clamour' to intimidate or divert it from deciding impartially on the interests of the country. For three months, during the discussions on the Scotch Union, the table of the Scotch Parliament had been daily covered with hostile petitions. But the Scotch Parliament had persevered, and by doing so it had earned the gratitude of both countries.

Passing from this branch of his subject, Castlereagh recapitulated at much length the well-known arguments in favour of the Union, and he then proceeded to explain its financial aspects. In the Scotch Union the principle had been adopted of at once subjecting Scotland to the English debt, and com-

pensating her for this burden by an indemnity. The disproportion between the debts of England and Ireland was so great, that such a course was impossible. The debt charge of Great Britain was now 20,000,000*l.* a year. The debt charge of Ireland was 1,300,000*l.* a year. It was therefore determined that the two debts should be kept wholly separate, that the taxation of the two countries should be separate, but that a fixed proportion should be established in which each should contribute to the general expenses of the Empire. The first great task was to find a basis of calculation by which this proportion might be ascertained. A comparison of the average value of the imports and exports of the two countries during the last three years showed, Castlereagh said, that they bore to each other the proportion of nearly 7 to 1. A similar comparison of the value of the malt, beer, spirits, wine, tea, tobacco, and sugar consumed in the two countries, showed a proportion of 7⅞ to 1. The medium of these two calculations was 7½ to 1, and from these figures the Government inferred that Great Britain ought to contribute 15 parts, and Ireland 2, to the general expenses of the Empire.

This proportion was to continue unchanged for twenty years, in order that the Union system might acquire stability. After this period the Imperial Parliament was to have the power of revising it according to the increased or diminished relative ability of the two countries, but it was stipulated that this revision must be made upon the same basis of calculation as that on which the original proportion had been fixed. In this way Ireland would obtain a complete security that she could not be taxed beyond her comparative ability, and that the ratio of her contribution must ever correspond with her relative wealth and prosperity.

It was next proposed to establish that the revenues of Ireland should constitute a consolidated fund, which was to be charged in the first place with the interest and sinking fund of the Irish debt, and afterwards appropriated to its proportionate contribution; that the Imperial Parliament might impose on Ireland such taxes as were necessary for her contingent, but with the limitation that in no case should any article in Ireland be taxed higher than the same article in Great Britain; that if, at the end of any year, a surplus should

accrue from the revenues of Ireland, it should be applied to purely Irish purposes; and that all future loans, for the interest and liquidation of which the two countries made provision in proportion to their respective contributions, should be considered as a joint debt. Parliament, however, might, if it thought fit, not make such corresponding provisions in the two countries, and in that case the respective quota of the loans borne by each country should remain as a separate charge, like the debts contracted before the Union.

During the last few years, Castlereagh observed, Great Britain had raised within the year a larger proportion of her supplies than Ireland was able in time of war to do. It was, therefore, certain that the proportion of the two debts would vary, and possible that it might some day so change that the system of a separate debt charge might become unnecessary. There were two cases in which this might occur. If the separate debts of the two countries should be extinguished, or if the increase of one debt and the diminution of the other should ever bring them to the same proportion as the respective contributions of the two countries, a system of indiscriminate taxation would become possible.

In his speech in the preceding year, Castlereagh had seemed to foreshadow clearly a period of increased taxation, and this had furnished Foster with some of his most powerful arguments. Castlereagh now boldly maintained that smaller expenditure and lighter taxation would follow the Union. He endeavoured, by somewhat intricate calculations, to prove, that if Ireland retained her separate Legislature, she would in every year of war pay about a million, and in every year of peace about 500,000*l.*, more than if she were united to Great Britain, and that a great relief of taxation would accordingly be the consequence of the Union.

Passing to the commercial clauses of the Union, he said that he could have wished that the situation of the two countries could have been at once and completely assimilated, so that they might have become like two counties of the same kingdom. This was, however, for the present, for two reasons, impossible. The first reason was 'the necessity of consulting the situation of particular manufactures, which may require to a certain

degree a continuance of that guard and protection which they have received to shelter their infant state.' The second reason was, the unequal burden of the two debts, which unavoidably created an inequality of internal taxation. As, therefore, it was proposed that the export to each country should be free, it was necessary that duties on importation should be imposed, 'to balance and countervail the internal duties in either country.' As freedom of trade was the object to be desired, it was hoped that the articles secured by protecting duties would be few, and that the exceptional duties would cease when they ceased to be necessary.

The commercial clauses of the Union were based on these general principles, and were modelled to a great extent upon the commercial propositions of 1785, which had been so powerfully defended by Foster, and which, in their commercial aspect, had received the approbation of the Irish House of Commons, though they had been rejected on a constitutional ground which was not now at issue. They were comprised in several sections. The first section provided that the subjects and the produce of either country should be placed upon an equal footing for ever as to all privileges, encouragements, and bounties. By this section, Castlereagh said, the perpetual continuance of the British and Irish bounties on the export of Irish linen would be secured, and Ireland would participate with England in the right to provide the British navy with sailcloth, from which she was at present excluded.

The second section repealed all prohibitions on the export of the produce of one country to the other, and provided that all articles should be exported duty free. This section secured to Ireland the raw materials which she received from Great Britain, including the staple commodity of English wool, and in two respects it went beyond the propositions of 1785; for in that year England had reserved a duty on coal exported to Ireland, and retained her complete prohibition of the export of British wool. The same section put an end to all bounties on articles of trade between the kingdoms, with the exception of malt, flour and grain, which were, for the present, continued under the existing regulations.

The third section enumerated the articles which were subject

to duty in either country, and fixed the rate of the duty on each. The question what duty was adequate for the purpose of securing the manufactures of Ireland from being crushed and annihilated by those of England, was very important. The Government decided that 10 per cent. duty, in addition to the cost of freight, which was estimated at 5½ per cent., was amply sufficient. A higher duty would sacrifice the interests of the consumer, and encourage indolence in the manufacturer, and no manufacture deserved much encouragement which could not be maintained with an advantage of 15½ per cent. At the same time, Castlereagh anticipated a time when all such duties would be abolished; and a short additional period of the progress which Irish manufactures had exhibited in the latter days of the Irish Parliament would, he believed, place them beyond all fear of competition. 'When I fix this rate of protection,' he said, 'I wish it should continue for such a period of years as will give security to the speculations of the manufacturers. At the same time, I wish to look forward to a period when duties of this kind may be gradually diminished, and ultimately cease. It must be evident to every man, that if our manufactures keep pace in advancement for the next twenty years with the progress they have made in the last twenty years, they may, at the expiration of it, be fully able to cope with the British; and that the two kingdoms may be safely left, like any two counties of the same kingdom, to a free competition.' It was, therefore, provided that after twenty years the United Parliament might diminish the duties of protection in such ratio as may be expedient, and it was also provided that all articles which were not specially enumerated in the Act, should be duty free upon import. In this way, Castlereagh said, Ireland would be perpetually secured in the English market for her linen.

The remaining sections authorised such countervailing duties as might balance the internal duties growing out of the unequal taxation of the two countries; provided that the charges on the re-export of native, foreign, and colonial goods should be the same in both countries, and that no drawback should be retained upon any article exported from one country to the other; and finally provided that a sum equal to that which was now applied to the encouragement of manufactures

and to charitable purposes, should continue to be so applied by the United Parliament.

The relations of the Union to religious questions were touched lightly. 'One State, one Legislature, one Church—these are the leading features of the system, and without identity with Great Britain in these three great points of connection, we never can hope for any real and permanent security.' 'A firm Government and a steady system can never be hoped for, so long as the Constitution and Establishments of Ireland can be made a subject of separate question and experiment.' The first great object was to place the Established Church on a natural basis by incorporating it with that of England, and identifying it with the population and property of the Empire, but its security would speedily react favourably on the position of the Catholics. Castlereagh did not promise Catholic emancipation, or a payment of priests. He said only that 'strength and confidence would produce liberality;' that the claims of the Catholics could be discussed and decided on with temper and impartiality in an Imperial Parliament, 'divested of those local circumstances which produce irritation and jealousy, and prevent a fair and reasonable decision;' that the accusation of having bribed the Catholic clergy was unjust, as 'an arrangement, both for the Catholic and Dissenting clergy, had been long in the contemplation of his Majesty's Government.'

He then proceeded to explain and to defend the proposed system of representation. In the Upper House, Ireland was to be represented by four spiritual peers sitting in rotation, and by twenty-eight temporal peers elected for life. To the Lower House she was to send sixty-four county members, and thirty-six borough members representing the chief cities and towns, and the University of Dublin.[1] Patrons of the disfranchised boroughs were to be compensated. 'If this be a measure of purchase, it will be the purchase of peace, and the expense of it will be redeemed by one year's saving of the Union.' The Irish representation thus established, would be so popular in its

[1] In arguing this point Castlereagh said: 'The population of Ireland is, in general, estimated from 3,500,000 to 4,000,000.' It is almost certain that this was an understatement. There is, as I have already shown (p. 234), strong reason to believe, that the population of Ireland in 1800 somewhat exceeded 4,500,000.

nature and effects, that in a separate Parliament it would be highly dangerous, especially since the Relief Act of 1793 had introduced a new class of electors into the constituencies. But mixed with the representation of Great Britain, and forming part of a large and stable assembly, its danger would disappear, and it might be safely entrusted with the interests of Ireland.

Such, concluded Castlereagh, in a somewhat cumbrous but very instructive peroration, was the proposal made by Great Britain to Ireland. 'It is one which will entirely remove those anomalies from the Executive which are the perpetual sources of discontent and jealousy. It is one which will relieve the apprehensions of those who fear that Ireland was, in consequence of an Union, to be burdened with the debt of Great Britain. It is one which, by establishing a fair principle of contribution, goes to release Ireland from an expense of 1,000,000*l.* in time of war, and of 500,000*l.* in time of peace. It is one which increases the resources of our commerce, protects our manufactures, secures to us the British market, and encourages all the products of our soil. It is one that, by uniting the Church Establishments and consolidating the Legislatures of the Empire, puts an end to religious jealousy, and removes the possibility of separation. It is one which places the great question which has so long agitated the country, upon the broad principles of Imperial policy, and divests it of all its local difficulties. It is one which establishes such a representation for the country as must lay asleep for ever the question of parliamentary reform, which, combined with our religious divisions, has produced all our distractions and calamities.'

It is unnecessary to follow at length the debate which ensued. Most of the arguments have been already given, and the resolutions containing the terms of the intended Bill, which were now laid before the House, were too fresh for much profitable criticism. Several speakers denied with great emphasis the assertion that the country, or the greater part of the property of the country, favoured the Union. They asserted, on the contrary, that the general voice was strongly and clearly adverse to it; that 'the detestation of it was strikingly apparent in every quarter of the kingdom, and among all classes of people;' and that this

fact was proved by the contrast between the small number of signatures to addresses in favour of the Union, and the petitions against it from so many counties, which covered the table.

The Opposition justified also with great force their appeal to the country. They had only done, in a fairer and larger measure, what the Government itself had done, when it endeavoured, by addresses signed in many quarters, and by the personal influence exercised by the Lord Lieutenant in his journey through Ireland, to procure such a semblance of popular support as might counteract the effect of the hostile vote of the House of Commons in 1799. Was it very strange, they asked, that they should endeavour to procure the real sense of the country, when so many extraordinary means had been used to procure an apparent one? Was the question whether 'the supreme power of the State should be transferred to a country divided from Ireland by boundaries which could not be removed, and by feelings which could not be extinguished,' a question which should, in no sense, be submitted to the judgment of the people? Was it not peculiarly desirable at a time when a formidable rebellion was scarcely suppressed, and when martial law was in force, that men of rank, property, and respectability, should come forward to show the people the safety and propriety of expressing, in a constitutional manner, their sense of a measure that would deprive them of their Constitution? And did not this course become imperatively necessary when the means were considered by which this measure was being carried? 'What a comprehensive system of corruption!' exclaimed George Ponsonby; 'the peers are to be purchased with a life privilege, the bishops are to be rotated that the Ministry may have all the influence of the Church, and two-thirds of the Commons are declared to be a mere purchasable commodity!'

The father of Miss Edgeworth made another of those curious, balanced, hesitating speeches, which are so unlike the general character of Irish oratory. Considered on its merits, and in the abstract merely, all the arguments, he thought, were in favour of the Union, but he was still resolved to oppose it. 'He thought it improper to urge the scheme unless it should appear to be desired by the sober and impartial majority of the nation;

and while seventy boroughs were allowed to be saleable commodities, for which the public money was to be given, he not only deemed it impossible to collect the genuine sense of the nation in that House, but could not conscientiously support a scheme attended with this avowed corruption.'

The debate lasted from four o'clock in the afternoon of the 5th, till one on the following afternoon.[1] The division is said to have been the largest ever known in the Irish House of Commons, 278 members, including the Speaker and the tellers, being present. The Government had 158 votes, and the Opposition 115. Eight members only were absent and unpaired, and it was understood that these had stayed away intentionally, wishing neither to support nor oppose the Government. It is a curious fact that Colonel Fitzgibbon, the son and successor of Lord Clare, was among the number.[2] Although the present majority of forty-three exceeded by one vote that of January 16, it in reality marked a serious retrogression, for on the former occasion a considerable number of seats at the disposal of the Government had been vacant. Twelve of their former supporters passed to the Opposition, one of them, as I have already mentioned, having been purchased by the sum of 4,000*l.* How far the others were influenced by genuine conviction, by the opinions of their constituents, or by corrupt motives, it is impossible to say. Cornwallis and Castlereagh stated that they had undoubted proofs, though not such as could be disclosed, that the Opposition were able to offer, and did offer, as much as 5,000*l.* for a single vote. 'How it will end,' wrote Cornwallis, 'God only knows. I think there are not more than four or five of our people that can be either bought off or intimidated, but there is no answering for the courage or integrity of our senators.'[3]

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 181. Barrington says the division took place at 11 A.M. For Castlereagh's speech I have followed the separately published report, and for the others the more imperfect reports in Coote's *History of the Union*.

[2] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 181.

[3] Ibid. iii. 182–184. The reader may compare with this the remarks of the contemporary and very impartial historian of the Union. 'If we consider the number of placemen and other influenced members who voted at the last division, the Cabinet had little cause for real or honourable triumph, as the majority could not be deemed sufficient to give full sanction to the scheme in a moral or conscientious point of view. Though we are friendly to the measure itself, we cannot applaud the perseverance of those who resolved to carry it into effect against the sense of the inde-

In the House of Lords, the Government were much stronger. Lord Clare, himself, brought forward the first resolution approving of the Union. He had not yet taken any opportunity of stating his own arguments in favour of the measure of which he was, in a great degree, the author, and he now treated the subject in a memorable and most elaborate speech, which occupied four hours in its delivery, and which was immediately after published by authority. The greater portion of it consisted of a very skilful, but very partial, review of the past history of Ireland, with the object of showing that the possessors of the land and political power of the country were a mere English colony, who never had been, and who never could be, blended or reconciled with the native race.[1] 'What was the situation of Ireland,' he asked, 'at the Revolution, and what is it at this day? The whole power and property of the country has been conferred by successive monarchs of England upon an English colony, composed of three sets of English adventurers who poured into this country at the termination of three successive rebellions. Confiscation is their common title; and from their first settlement they have been hemmed in on every side by the old inhabitants of the island, brooding over their discontents in sullen indignation. It is painful to me to go into this detail, but we have been for twenty years in a fever of intoxication, and must be stunned into sobriety. What was the security of the English settlers for their physical existence at the Revolution? And what is the security of their descendants at this day? The powerful and commanding protection of Great Britain. If, by any fatality, it fails, you are at the mercy of the old inhabitants of the island; and I should have hoped that the samples of mercy exhibited by them in the progress of the late rebellion, would have taught the gentlemen who call themselves the Irish nation, to reflect with sober attention on the dangers which surround them.'

pendent part of the House of Commons; for of the opposition of a real majority of uninfluenced senators, no doubts could be entertained by any man of sense or reflection who knew the predicament and constitution of that assembly.' (Coote's *History of the Union*, p. 381.)

[1] I have quoted a few sentences from this speech, in another connection, in a former volume, but the reader will, I trust, excuse a repetition which is essential to bring out the full force of Lord Clare's argument.

He described the efforts that had been made by the Irish Parliament to obtain an Union in 1703 and 1707; how the Ministers of Queen Anne refused to grant it, and how, 'in finding a substitute for it, there had been a race of impolicy between the countries. The Parliament of England seemed to have considered the permanent debility of Ireland as their best security for her connection with the British Crown, and the Irish Parliament to have rested the security of the colony upon maintaining a perpetual and impassable barrier against the ancient inhabitants of the country.' This was the true meaning of the commercial disabilities and of the penal laws; and this system continued with little variation, till the American War and the volunteers led to the demand and the concession of free trade and a free Constitution. 'On the old Irish volunteers,' he said, 'I desire to be understood not to convey anything like a censure. Their conduct will remain a problem in history; for without the shadow of military control, to their immortal honour it is known that, from their first levy till they disbanded themselves, no act of violence or outrage was charged against them; and they certainly did, on every occasion where their services were required, exert themselves with effect to maintain the internal peace of the country. The gentlemen of Ireland were all in their ranks, and maintained a decided influence upon them. But I shall never cease to think that the appeals made to that army by the angry politicians of that day, were dangerous and ill-judged in the extreme; and that they established a precedent for rebellion, which has since been followed up with full success.'

He dilated with extreme bitterness upon the defects of the Constitution of 1782, which he now represented as the root of all the subsequent evils of the country; upon the history of the commercial propositions, and the history of the Regency; upon the alliance that had grown up between the Oppositions in England and Ireland. He spoke of Grattan in language which was evidently inspired by deep personal hatred. He passed then to the Catholic question: 'with respect to the old code of the popery laws,' he said, 'there cannot be a doubt that it ought to have been repealed. It was impossible that any country could continue to exist under a code by which a majority of its

inhabitants were cut off from the rights of property. But in the relaxation of these laws there was a fatal error. It should have been taken up systematically by the Ministers of the Crown, and not left in the hands of every individual who chose to take possession of it, as an engine of power or popularity.'

He next told in his own fashion the history of the rise of the Catholic Committee, of the mission of Burke's son, of the fluctuating policy and the great concessions of 1792 and 1793, of the manner in which the Whigs, who had once been pre-eminently the anti-popish party in the State, took up, for party purposes, the Catholic cause; of the Government, the mistakes and the recall of Lord Fitzwilliam. For this Viceroy he now professed 'a warm and unfeigned personal respect,' which contrasts curiously with the language he had employed during his Viceroyalty and immediately after his recall. Under all these influences, he said, the question of Catholic emancipation had been fully launched. It had been originally started as a pretence for rebellion. It had been then made a powerful 'engine of faction,' wielded in both countries; it had already shaken Irish Government to its foundations, and without an Union it must soon level it to the dust. Ireland never can be at peace, 'until this firebrand is extinguished,' and it never can be extinguished as long as a separate Parliament remains. It forms an inexhaustible source of popular ferment; the common topic of discontent and irritation to rally the old inhabitants of the island. It is idle to suppose that in this direction any finality could be reached. If every political disqualification were abolished, there would still be the grievance of the Established Church. If that Church were swept away, the popish party would then demand a formal recognition of the laws of their own Church, and 'when every other point has been yielded, an apostle of sedition will not be wanting, in the fullness of human arrogance and presumption, to propose a repeal of God's holy Commandment, and to proclaim the worship of graven images in your streets.' If, as appeared evident, the Catholics, not satisfied with the indulgences they had already experienced, were determined to press their demands for the unqualified repeal of the Test Laws and Act of Supremacy; then, in God's name, let the question at least be discussed on its solid merits in a power-

ful Imperial Parliament, removed from fear and passion and prejudice. Let it there be 'gravely and dispassionately considered, whether a repeal of these laws may be yielded with safety to the British monarchy; or whether, by adopting the French model in abolishing all religious distinctions as connected with the State, we shall lay the corner stone of Revolution and Democracy.'

For his own part, Clare left no doubt about his opinions or about the course he would take, and once more, as in 1793, he openly severed himself from his colleagues in the Government, who were doing all in their power to conciliate the Catholics, and to win their support by persuading them that emancipation must follow the Union. 'My unaltered opinion,' he said, 'is that so long as human nature and the popish religion continue to be what I know they are, a conscientious popish ecclesiastic never will become a well-attached subject to a Protestant State, and that the popish clergy must always have a commanding influence on every member of that Communion. . . . In private life I never inquired into the religion of any man, . . . but when I am to frame laws for the safety of the State, I do not feel myself at liberty to act upon the virtues of individuals. Laws must be framed to meet and counteract the vicious propensities of human nature.'

He then argued that parliamentary reform, whether it was carried on the lines of the Whig opposition, or on those of the United Irishmen, could only throw the country into the hands of a Jacobin democracy, subversive alike of religion and monarchy, of property and the connection. Though two years before he had described the country as advancing in prosperity more rapidly than any other in Europe, he now painted its situation as absolutely desperate. He related the rapid rise of the national debt, and attributed it far less to the French war than to internal rebellion. 'We have not three years of redemption,' he said, 'from bankruptcy or intolerable taxation, not one hour's security against the renewal of exterminating civil war. . . . Session after session you have been compelled to enact laws of unexampled rigour and novelty to repress the horrible excesses of the mass of your people; and the fury of murder and pillage and desolation have so outrun all legislative exertion,

that you have at length been driven to the hard necessity of . . . putting your country under the ban of military government, and in every little circle of dignity and independence we hear whispers of discontent at the temperate discretion with which it is administered. . . . Look to your civil and religious dissensions, look to the fury of political faction, and the torrents of human blood that stain the face of your country;' to the enormous expense necessary 'to keep down the brutal fury of the mass of the Irish people, who have been goaded to madness by every wicked artifice that disappointed faction can devise.' 'Our present difficulties arise' not from a foreign, but 'from an Irish war—a war of faction—a Whig war and a United Irishman's war. . . . If England were at peace at this hour with all the Powers of Europe . . . you would be compelled to maintain a war establishment for defence against your own people.' The civil war of 1641 had been a war of extermination. The recent civil war would have been no less so, if it had not been for the 'strong and merciful interposition of Great Britain,' which saved 'the besotted rebels of this day.' But the scale of expense rendered necessary by the rebellion was ruinous. If it continued for three years 2,430,000*l.* must be raised for the interest of the debt alone.[1]

It was asked, Clare said, in what way these evils would be rectified by the Union. His first very confident prediction was one which we have already met in the pamphlet of Cooke, and which has been so glaringly and uniformly falsified by the event, that it now appears almost grotesque. 'I answer first,' he said, 'we are to be relieved from British and Irish faction, which is the prime source of all our calamities.'

Besides this, the army of the Empire would become one, and as it would be a matter of indifference where it was quartered, Ireland would thus be sufficiently garrisoned without additional expense; the resources of Ireland would be greatly augmented; English capital and manufactures, English industry and civilisation, would gradually cross the Channel, and the higher order of Irishmen would be withdrawn 'from the narrow and corrupted

[1] The reader who desires to compare this prediction with the actual progress of the Irish debt after the Union, will find full materials in the Parliamentary Reports on the Taxation of Ireland, 1864 and 1865.

sphere of Irish politics,' and would direct their attention to objects of true national importance.

For all aspirations of Irish nationality and all appeals to national dignity, he expressed unbounded scorn. He declared that he would most gladly entrust the government of Ireland to the British Parliament, even though Ireland had not a single representative in it. 'When I look,' he said, 'at the squalid misery, and profound ignorance, and barbarous manners and brutal ferocity of the mass of the Irish people, I am sickened with this rant of Irish dignity and independence. Is the dignity and independence of Ireland to consist in the continued depression and unredeemed barbarism of the great majority of the people, and the factious contentions of a puny and rapacious oligarchy, who consider the Irish nation as their political inheritance, and are ready to sacrifice the public peace and happiness to their insatiate love of patronage and power? . . . If we are to pursue the beaten course of faction and folly, I have no scruple to say, it were better for Great Britain that this island should sink into the sea, than continue connected with the British Crown on the terms of our present Union. . . . The British Islands are formed by nature for mutual security or mutual destruction, and if we are to pursue the course we have thought fit to run for the last twenty years, it may become a question of doubtful issue, whether at a crisis of difficulty and danger, Great Britain will be enabled to support us, or we shall sink Great Britain.'

There was much more in the same strain, and it was followed by a furious invective against those who had appealed to the people to express their opinions in hostility to the scheme. He spoke of these men as 'the modern Revolutionary Government, of the Irish Consulate canvassing the dregs of that rebel democracy, for a renewal of popular ferment and outrage, to overawe the deliberations of Parliament.' He said that, in the awful and perilous situation of the nation, the offer of England had been treated by gentlemen who called themselves friends of liberty and the Irish Constitution with 'the fury of wild beasts;' that the lawyers had set the example; that 'appeals of the most virulent and inflammatory tendency were made by these same friends of liberty, to the deluded barbarians who had been so recently consigned by them to indiscriminate extirpation;' that

in Parliament the 'Friends of Liberty and the Constitution' at first would not suffer the Government measure to be discussed, and then, when it was relinquished, had tried to press it to a premature discussion in order to prevent its revival. But 'when this first burst of noise and clamour had subsided,' and the plan was calmly considered, 'the sober and rational part of the Irish nation saw in the measure of an Union a fair prospect of peace and wealth and happiness for their country, and the bulk of the people, professing not to understand the subject, were perfectly indifferent to it. Such was the state of the public mind upon this question, when the late recess of Parliament took place; and to their eternal reproach and dishonour be it spoken, some persons of high rank and consequence in the kingdom availed themselves of that opportunity to become emissaries of sedition, and to canvass popular support against the measure by the most shameless impositions on the ignorance and credulity of every man who would listen to them. . . . But the active exertions of itinerant Lords and Commoners were not deemed sufficient for the occasion, and we have seen a consular authority assumed by two noble lords and a right honourable commoner, who have issued their letter missive to every part of the kingdom; commanding the people, in the name of a number of gentlemen of both Houses of Parliament, to come forward with petitions condemning in terms of violence and indignation the measure of Union prior to its discussion in Parliament. . . . Is there salvation for this country under her present Government and Constitution, when men of their rank and situation can stoop to so shabby and wicked an artifice, to excite popular outcry against the declared sense of both Houses of Parliament? But this is not all. If loud and confident report is to have credit, a consular exchequer has been opened for foul and undisguised bribery. I know that subscriptions are openly solicited in the streets of the metropolis to a fund for defeating the measure of Union. . . . I trust there is still sense and honour left in the Irish nation, to cut off the corrupted source of these vile abominations.'

These are the most material, or at least the most original passages in this powerful speech, for it is needless to follow it through its discussion of the old familiar topics of absenteeism,

the position of Dublin, the benefits a poor country must receive from a partnership with a rich one, the history and effects of the Scotch Union. Clare must have been heard or read with very mingled feelings by many of the supporters of Government; by 'the puny and rapacious oligarchy,' on whose purchased borough votes the Ministers mainly relied to carry their measure; by those who held, with Cornwallis, that the special benefit of the Union would be, that it would render possible a complete and speedy abolition of religious disqualifications; by those who relied chiefly for its justification, on its approval by a great body of opinion in Ireland, and especially on the friendly disposition of the Catholics.

The speech was evidently more fitted to defy and to exasperate, than to conciliate public opinion, and it is easy to trace in it that burning hatred of Ireland, that disgust at its social and political conditions, which had of late become the dominant feeling of Clare.[1] This feeling was probably much intensified by disappointment, for the horrible scenes of anarchy and bloodshed, which he mainly traced to the concessions of 1782 and 1793, had only taken their acute form after his own triumph in 1795, and had been largely attributed to his own policy. That his picture, both of the social condition of the country and of the difficulties of its Government, during the preceding twenty years, was enormously exaggerated, few persons who have seriously studied that period will dispute, and still fewer will subscribe to his condemnation of the Irish county members for appealing to the opinion of the freeholders against a measure which had never been submitted to the constituencies, and which was being carried in manifest defiance of the wishes of the great majority of the independent members. Denunciations of corruption are in themselves always respectable, and in the conduct of the Opposition there was something to justify them, but they came with a strange audacity from a statesman who had boasted that half a million had been once, and might be again expended to break down an Opposition, and who was at this very time a leading member of a Government which was securing a majority by such means as I have described.

[1] 'Our damnable country,' as he described it in a letter to Auckland. Even in his will he spoke of 'this giddy and distracted country.'

The division in the Lords gave seventy-five votes to the Government, and only twenty-six to the Opposition, and the Bill passed through its remaining stages in that House with little discussion. The debates are very imperfectly reported, and there seems to have been but little in them that need delay us. Lord Downshire, who was there the most important member of the Opposition, spoke, Lord Cornwallis says, apparently under great depression. He appears to have denied the existence of a 'consular exchequer,' or at least to have asserted that he had not subscribed to it, and he acknowledged that he had been no admirer of the Constitution of 1782, and that if an Union had been proposed in that year, or at the time of the Regency, he might have supported it. A time of distraction, however, and turbulence like the present, seemed to him peculiarly unsuitable for such a measure, and he feared that it would only inflame public discontent, and obstruct the return of tranquillity. Ireland had incontestably made great strides in wealth and commerce under her separate Parliament; when the late rebellion broke out, that Parliament had saved the country by its energy, and he could not consent to subvert it on mere speculation, or through visionary hopes of greater benefits. The causes of the rebellion he found chiefly in the divided counsels and inconsistent policy of the Ministers. He had himself, as a friend of Government, been requested to sign a strong declaration in support of the Protestant ascendency. A few months later he had been called upon by the same Government to vote for a most extensive measure of Catholic enfranchisement. He complained bitterly that, after a life spent in supporting the Government, after having been admitted into their close confidence, and having made for them great sacrifices in very evil times, he was denounced as if he were a seditious man, because he had signed the 'letter missive.' 'He had acted as an independent gentleman of Ireland, as a man of large possessions, acquainted with the state of the country, and deeply interested in its welfare. As it had been confidently asserted that the Unionists had a greater extent of property than their opponents, it was incumbent on those who had a better knowledge of the opinion of the public, to call for a constitutional declaration of sentiment, not from the dregs of the people, but from the more respectable part

of the community. . . . This was not the conduct of seditious or disloyal men.'[1]

One of the most memorable figures on the side of the Government in these debates was the Chief Baron, Lord Yelverton, who had borne so considerable a part in framing the Constitution of 1782, and who had once been in the closest alliance with Grattan. He was a great lawyer, an admirable speaker, a statesman of sound and moderate judgment, a man of eminent accomplishments, and of a singularly sweet, simple, and even childlike nature, but, like many distinguished Irishmen, his character had been broken down by extravagance and debt, and he gained too much by the Union for his authority to have much weight.[2] His opinion in its favour had, however, been expressed at a time when the chance of success was very doubtful, and he spoke more than once powerfully in its support, dwelling especially upon the full competence of Parliament to carry it, and upon the evidence which modern history supplied of the inadequacy of a federal connection, for defence in time of danger, or for securing a lasting and real Union. He recalled with pride his connection with the Constitution of 1782, stating that this Constitution had made it possible for Ireland to secure an Union of equality instead of an Union of subjection, but he declared that even in 1782 he had desired an Union, and would have readily accepted it if it had been proposed. He at the same time showed some courage by delivering, in the face of a great ministerial majority, an eloquent protest against the imputations that had been thrown upon Grattan. He well knew him, he said, 'to be as incapable of engaging in any plot for sepa-

[1] Compare Coote's *History of the Union*, pp. 411–414; *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 185, 186.

[2] Many interesting particulars about Yelverton will be found in Barrington, Grattan's *Life*, and Phillips' *Recollections of Curran*. He at once pressed for promotion in the peerage (*Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 258); he was made Viscount Avonmore immediately after the Union, and some places taken from the Downshire family were given to his relations. When Lord Clare died, Lord Hardwicke wished his successor to be an Irishman, and the claims of the chief judges were considered. Abbot then wrote: 'Lord Avonmore, whose learning and talents are unquestionably great, is nevertheless so totally negligent of propriety of manners, and so extremely embarrassed in his private concerns, that it is hardly creditable for the King's service, for him to remain Chief Baron of the Exchequer. His very salary of office is assigned to pay his creditors, by deed enrolled in his own court.' (Abbot to Addington, Jan. 19, 1802. *Lord Colchester's MSS.*)

rating this country from Great Britain, as the most strenuous advocate of the present measure.[1]

The majority in the House of Lords greatly disliked the portion of the Union scheme which left the King an unlimited power of creating Irish peers after the Union, and they desired that the precedent of the Scotch Union should be followed, and the roll of the Irish peerage closed. The feeling was so strong, that the King's principal servants believed that the clause relating to the peerage could not pass, but a compromise was at last agreed to, leaving the Crown the power of creating one Irish peerage for every three that should become extinct, until the whole number was reduced to a hundred.[2] At the last stage a protest against the resolutions was signed by the Duke of Leinster, and nineteen other peers. They complained of the annihilation in a time of great danger and disturbance, and in opposition to the general voice of the nation, of the Constitution which had for many ages maintained the connection between the two countries, and been the best security for the liberty of Ireland. They argued in much detail, that the proportion of the expenditure of the Empire imposed on Ireland exceeded her capacity, and must lead her to speedy bankruptcy, and they appealed solemnly to posterity to acquit them of having had any part in a measure from which they anticipated the ruin and degradation of their country.[3]

[1] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, ii. 25; iii. 373; *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 41, 220. There is a sketch of Yelverton's speech on March 22, in Coote, and it was printed fully as a pamphlet both in Dublin and London. It is rather too lawyer-like a performance. Cooke wrote of it: 'Lord Yelverton made a fine speech, but praised Grattan too much for our purpose.' (Cooke to King, March 24, 1800. R.O.) In a private letter to Lord Grenville, Cooke says: 'Lord Yelverton made a most able speech on the general question, but he rather interlarded too much exculpation and praise of Grattan. He also denied that any propositions were ever made to him by the Duke of Portland in 1782, of any measures which had the tendency to an Union, or were to be a substitute for it. I understand, however, that the proposal on this subject was at his house, but that both his Lordship and Fitzpatrick were so drunk that they might well have forgotten what passed. This, at least, is the Bishop of Meath's account of what passed.' Cooke to Grenville, March 24, 1800. (*Grenville MSS.*)

[2] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 208, 219. The Duke of Portland, in conceding this point, took occasion to express his admiration of the Irish aristocracy, 'whose exemplary conduct, in the course of this great business, entitles them to every possible mark of consideration, and must secure to them the gratitude of their latest posterity.' (Ibid. p. 226.) This curious passage appears to have been written with perfect seriousness.

[3] Seward's *Collectanea Politica*, iii. 516–520. One of the peers, however, subscribed to only a portion of the protest.

We must now revert briefly to the struggle in the Commons. The excitement in Dublin while the question was under debate was very great. A furious mob again attacked some of the supporters of the Union, and attempted to throw their carriages into the Liffey, and it was found necessary to guard the streets by patrols of cavalry as in a period of rebellion.[1] The Government, however, acted with great decision. It was at this time that Lord Downshire was deprived of all his posts, and the Duke of Portland wrote that the smallness of the last majority had in no degree shaken or discouraged the Cabinet in England. 'No means,' he added, 'should be omitted, no exertion neglected, that can insure this measure, and there is no assistance of any kind which the Government of this country can afford your Excellency, that you may not depend upon, as it is the unanimous opinion of those concerned in the administration of it, that it is essentially necessary to the security, as well as to the prosperity of both kingdoms.' 'I must not omit,' he wrote in another letter, 'to authorise and instruct you to declare that no disappointment (which, however, the goodness of the cause and your exertions will not suffer me to apprehend), will ever induce his Majesty or his servants to recede from, or to suspend their endeavours; but that it is his Majesty's fixed and unalterable determination to direct, session after session, the proposition of Union to be renewed to Parliament, until it is adopted by the good sense of the nation.'[2]

The Government were extremely anxious that the question should be pressed on without delay, while the first object of the Opposition was to postpone it till the opinion of the country was fully taken. On February 14, there was a preliminary discussion on the necessity of delaying the question till some further papers were produced, and George Knox delivered a short, but very remarkable speech. He argued that, whatever were its defects, the Irish Parliament had at least represented 'every variety of interest, property, talent, knowledge, wisdom and energy,' in the community; that it had produced among the people, however imperfectly, some real feeling of identity with the State, and had afforded a natural and constitutional issue for the various sentiments and passions that agitated them. If, as he feared, an

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 180, 181. [2] Ibid.

Imperial Parliament failed to fulfil this function, the result would prove most disastrous. He warned the House that content and loyalty do not always follow in the train of prosperity, and that nations act less from reason than from sentiment. It was quite possible, he believed, that a period was coming in Ireland, of better government, of augmented prosperity, and at the same time of steadily increasing discontent. He even predicted that a discontented and unguided Ireland might one day become, in the English-speaking world, as formidable a source and centre of aggressive Jacobinism as France had been on the Continent, and that the poison of its baneful influence might extend to the farthest limits of the civilised globe.

It was a bold, and, as many must have thought, a most extravagant prediction. Could there, it might be asked, be any real comparison, either for good or for ill, between a small remote island in the Atlantic, and the great nation which had for centuries exercised a dominant influence over the ideas and fortunes of Europe, and which had acquired in its recent transformation a volcanic fury that had shaken Christendom to its basis? Yet he who has traced the part which Irish Jacobinism has played during the last generations in those great English-speaking nations on which the future of the world most largely depends; who has examined the principles and precedents it has introduced into legislation; the influence it has exercised on public life and morals, and on the type and character of public men, may well doubt whether the prediction of Knox was even an exaggeration.

On the 17*th*, the Union passed into committee, and another long debate, extending over eighteen or twenty hours, took place. Among its incidents was a violent attack by Corry, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, upon Grattan, on account of his alleged complicity with Neilson and the United Irishmen, to which Grattan replied by one of those crushing and unmeasured invectives in which he sometimes indulged, and which are by no means among the most admirable specimens of his oratory. The excitement in the House was so great, that for several hours, Lord Cornwallis says, the debate went on without attention, and a duel followed, in which Corry was slightly wounded. Sir John Parnell attacked the whole scheme with much elaboration, and was answered by Lord Castlereagh, on whom almost the entire burden of the de-

fence seems to have fallen; and the Speaker, availing himself of the fact that the House was in committee, delivered another long, most able, and most comprehensive speech.

He began by deprecating the train of reasoning recently adopted by Clare and other speakers, who painted the situation of Ireland as so desperate, its people so debased, and its feuds so rooted, that any change of Government must be an improvement. 'Can those who now hear me,' he said, 'deny that since the period of 1782 this country has risen in civilisation, wealth, and manufacture, until interrupted by the present war, in a greater proportion and with a more rapid progress than any other country in Europe, and much more than it ever did itself in a like period before? And to what has this improvement been owing, but the spirit, the content, and enterprise which a free Constitution inspired? To depress which spirit, and to take away which Constitution, are the objects of the present measure.' He denied altogether that the independence of the Parliament was a mere name. It was true that the Great Seal of England, which was used through a British Minister, was essential to the validity of Irish legislation, but the royal assent had never been withheld to our injury since the Constitution of 1782, and it had become little more than a theoretic restraint. 'As no Legislature but our own can make a law to bind us, we have only theoretic dependence, but practical independence; whereas, if we adopt the proposed Union and give up our Parliament, we shall reverse our situation, and have a theoretic independence with a practical and sure dependence.' He then grappled at great length, and with a profusion of figures, with the argument that Ireland was on the verge of bankruptcy; that nothing but a legislative Union could prevent it; that the result of the Union would be an annual saving of a million in time of war, and of half a million in time of peace. The last two sessions had, he acknowledged, been the most expensive Ireland had ever seen; the House had measured its grants much less by its means than by its zeal to uphold Great Britain, and it had voted them at the express invitation of the very Minister who now made its liberality an argument for destroying it. But it was not true that Irish finances were desperate, and it was not true that the Union would improve them. In the first six years of the war, Great Britain had increased her debt by

186 millions, and Ireland by 14 millions, the proportionate increase being 12½ to 1. By a careful and intricate argument, to which it is impossible here to do justice, but which made a profound impression, though it was very seriously controverted, Foster maintained that if the proposed Union had existed from the beginning of the war, the debt of Ireland would have exceeded its present figure by nearly ten millions and a half, and that, instead of bringing reduced taxation, the Union would probably add not less than two and a half millions to the annual taxation.

He examined with great knowledge and detail, but with a strong protectionist bias, the commercial clauses, arguing that some parts would prove injurious to Ireland, and that others would confer advantages which might be equally attained with separate Legislatures, and he then discussed the constitutional provisions. He maintained that it was contrary to the now acknowledged principles of the Constitution, that peers who were elected as representatives should hold their seats for life; that it was absurd and mischievous that Irish peers who were not in the House of Lords might sit in the House of Commons for British seats, but not for the country with which they were naturally connected by property and residence; that such a provision would gradually dissociate the Irishmen of largest fortune from their native country; that the bulk of the Irish peerage, being deprived of the chief incentives and opportunities of political life, would sink into an idle, useless, enervated caste. He predicted that the removal of the legislative body to a capital which was several days' journey from Ireland, would exclude Irish merchants and eminent lawyers from the representation, impede all local inquiries, and fatally retard acquisition of local information; and he complained that, while elaborate provision was made for securing in the future a settled proportion of contribution, there was no corresponding provision for securing a just proportion in representation. 'A real union,' he said, 'is a full and entire union of two nations. . . . There can be no union of the nations while distinct interests exist, and almost every line of the plan declares the distinctness of interest. . . . Review the whole measure. It leaves us every appendage of a kingdom except what constitutes the essence of independence,

a resident Parliament. Separate State, separate establishment, separate exchequer, separate debt, separate courts, separate laws, the Lord Lieutenant, and the Castle, all remain.'

He denied that any real benefits, either in trade or revenue, could be expected, and added that, were it otherwise, he would spurn them if they were the price of the surrender of the Parliament. 'Neither revenue nor trade will remain where the spirit of liberty ceases to be their foundation, and nothing can prosper in a State which gives up its freedom. I declare most solemnly that if England could give us all her revenue and all her trade, I would not barter for them the free Constitution of my country. Our wealth, our properties, our personal exertions, are all devoted to her support. Our freedom is our inheritance, and with it we cannot barter.'

He denounced as a 'monstrous and unconstitutional offer' the proposal to compensate borough owners, making the public pay them for selling themselves, their constituents, and their country. 'Do you publicly avow that borough representation is a private property, and do you confirm that avowal by the Government becoming the purchasers?' This measure, he said, was notoriously taken for the purpose of acquiring in the small boroughs a majority which could not be obtained in the counties and considerable towns, and he believed that the precedent must necessarily be one day extended to England, and that it would prove far more dangerous to the British Constitution than all the East India Bills that were ever framed. By this and other kindred measures, he acknowledged that the Ministry had obtained a majority in favour of the Union, but he still believed, or pretended to believe, in the success of the minority. 'It is impossible to suppose that Ministers can think of proceeding against the determined sense of the 120 members who compose it, two-thirds of the county members among them, and supported by the voice of the nation. Look on your table at the petitions from twenty-five counties, from eight principal cities and towns, and from Dublin. Twenty-three of the counties convened by legal notice have, from time to time, declared against the Bill, and twenty of them unanimously. The whole mercantile interest deprecate it. Wherever you go, whoever you talk with out of doors, you hear it reprobated

universally. Every day brings new conviction of the abhorrence in which it is held throughout the kingdom.'

It is true, he said, that the promoters of the measure had endeavoured to alarm and divide the nation by joining the religious question with the question of Union, and exciting the strong and opposing hopes and fears that were involved in it. Foster emphatically refused to discuss Catholic emancipation in connection with the Union, or to admit that 'a distant Parliament sitting in a distant land' was more competent than the Irish Parliament to deal with this great Irish question, or more likely to give content by its decisions. 'The Catholic is equally [with the Protestant] a native of Ireland; equally bound by duty, by inclination to his country. He sees with us the danger of the attack, and joins with the Protestant to prevent its approach, and save the Constitution. He is wise in doing so. All differences are lost, they are asleep in this common cause. He joins heart to heart with his fellow-subjects to oppose the common enemy.'

'You talk,' continued Foster, 'of this measure restoring tranquillity. It is but talk. Will taking men of property out of the country do it? Will a plan full of the seeds of jealousy and discontent effect it? Will depriving a nation of the liberty which it has acquired, and to which it is devoted, insure content? If religious jealousies disturb its quiet, are they to be allayed by a British Parliament? . . . British, not Irish, councils roused them. British, not Irish, councils now propose this Union.'

Throughout this remarkable speech there is an evident reference to the arguments of Clare; and in his concluding passage, Foster dwelt with great power on Clare's attack on the county meetings, and on those who had convened them. 'It is the fashion to say the country is agitated, and certain letters, written by three members of Parliament, have been held forth as unconstitutional and inflammatory. This is the first time I ever heard a wish in gentlemen, to know the real sentiment of the freeholders by legal meetings to be convened by the sheriffs, insulted by such appellations. The noble lord and his friends said, the sense of the nation was with the measure. We doubted the fact, and the legal and undoubted right of our con-

stituents to tell us their sentiments could alone ascertain it. No, sir, that letter did not irritate, it was intended to appease. But I will tell you what has irritated—the reviving this ruinous measure after its rejection last year; the appeal nominal which the noble lord and his friends resorted to against the decision of Parliament; the refusing county meetings, which are the constitutional mode of collecting the sense of the freeholders, and sending papers directed to no man, neither address, nor petition, nor instructions, but a pledge of opinion, through all the chapels, the markets, the public-houses, and even the lowest cabins, for signatures, and setting those up against this House and the general voice of the kingdom. . . . I scarce need mention the unconstitutional use to which the Place Bill has been perverted, and the . . . monstrous proposal of applying the public money to purchase public rights from private individuals.' These, he said, were the true causes of the agitation that was so greatly deplored, and that agitation would never cease till the measure was abandoned.

In this, as in the other speeches of Foster, the reader may find the case against the Union in its strongest form, and may learn to estimate the feelings with which that measure was regarded by a large section of the Protestant gentlemen of Ireland. The Government majority, however, was unbroken, and the resolution declaring that there shall be a legislative Union between Great Britain and Ireland, was carried by a majority of forty-six.

From this division, the Opposition perceived that their cause was almost hopeless, and the measure now moved steadily, though slowly, through its remaining stages. Some of the resolutions passed with little discussion, and the difficult and delicate question of the relative contributions of the two countries was debated and agreed to in a single sitting on February 24. Lord Castlereagh took the occasion to reply, in a speech which appears to have been very able, to the calculation by which Foster had endeavoured to show that under the Union scheme the debt must increase much more rapidly than with a separate Parliament, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer predicted that 'in the next five years, taken in the proportion of two of war to three of peace,' Ireland under the Union would save nearly ten millions. Foster, Parnell, and others maintained that the

proportion imposed on Ireland was beyond her capacities; but a test division on a question of adjournment gave the Government 150 votes to 108, and an amendment of John Claudius Beresford, that the contribution of Ireland should be only two-twentieths instead of two-seventeenths, was speedily negatived. Plunket declared that he and his friends were determined to confine their opposition to the principle of the measure, and that they would decline to give it even that degree of sanction which might be implied in attempts to mend it. The whole resolution ultimately passed without a division.[1]

'I see no prospect of converts,' wrote Castlereagh at this time to the English Under Secretary of State. 'The Opposition are steady to each other. I hope we shall be able to keep our friends true. . . . We require *your assistance*, and you *must* be prepared to enable us to fulfil the expectations which it was impossible to avoid creating at the moment of difficulty. You may be sure we have rather erred on the side of moderation.' 'When can you make the remittance promised?' wrote Cooke to the same correspondent. 'It is absolutely essential, for our demands increase.'[2]

The Opposition now made it their chief and almost their only object, to delay the measure until the opinion of the country had been deliberately and constitutionally taken. Lord Corry, one of their most respected and candid members, sent a proposal to Lord Castlereagh, that if the Government would postpone any proceedings on the Union till the following session, the Opposition would give them the fullest support, and that, 'if the country should at that period appear to be in favour of an Union, they would give it a fair assistance.'[3] The proposal was at once rejected; and on March 4, George Ponsonby introduced a series of resolutions stating that petitions had already been presented against the Union in the present session from twenty-six counties; from the cities of Dublin and Limerick; from Belfast, Drogheda, Newry, and several other towns, and begging that

[1] Compare *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 199, 200; Coote, pp 444, 445. The best report I have seen of Castlereagh's reply to Foster is given in a pamphlet called, *A Reply to the Speech of the Speaker*, Feb. 17, 1800. Castlereagh's chief objection to the Speaker's calculation appears to have been, that Ireland contributed little to the war before 1797.

[2] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 200-202.

[3] Ibid. p. 200.

these resolutions should be transmitted to England and laid before the King. 110,000 persons, he said, had signed petitions against the Union, and it was the duty of the House to lay them before his Majesty, and to represent to him the true wishes of the people. He appealed to the message to Parliament on February 5, in which the Lord Lieutenant, while recommending a legislative Union, had relied on the general sentiment of the Irish people being in its favour, and he deduced from this that the concurrence of the will of the people was necessary to warrant Parliament in making a change which amounted to a transfer of the Constitution. Lord Castlereagh answered, that when the people were left to themselves, there was a general disposition among the loyal and well-informed classes to acquiesce in the Union; that the recent adverse expressions had been brought forward 'by manœuvre and artifice;' that seventy-four declarations in favour of the Union had been made by public bodies in the kingdom, nineteen of which had come from freeholders in the counties, and that in these declarations, rather than in the petitions to the House, the sense of the propertied and loyal part of the community was to be found. He added, that if on former occasions the sense of the people had been taken against the sense of Parliament, neither the Revolution Settlement of the Crown, nor the Union with Scotland, could have been accomplished. The Government carried an adjournment by 155 to 107.[1]

Another attempt of the same kind was made on the 13th by Sir John Parnell, who moved that an address should be presented to the King requesting him to dissolve Parliament, and take the sense of the constituencies before the legislative Union was concluded. Sir Lawrence Parsons, in supporting the motion, said that, well as he knew the immense influence exercised by the Crown in the choice of members, he was prepared to stake the issue on the result of an election; and Saurin, in a fiery speech, declared that a legislative Union, carried without having been brought constitutionally before the people, and in defiance of their known wishes, would not be morally binding, and that the right of resistance would remain. This doctrine was denounced as manifest Jacobinism, and as a direct incentive to rebellion. Grattan defended the motion in a short and moderate speech.

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 202–204; Coote, pp. 445, 446.

He disclaimed all wish of submitting the question on the French principle to mere multitude; to primary assemblies; to universal suffrage. He desired only that it should be brought before the constituencies legally and constitutionally determined, before 'the mixture of strength and property which forms the order of the country.' The Lord Lieutenant had recommended the Union on the supposition of the concurrence of the people. The English Minister had defended it as a measure for identifying two nations. The Irish Minister had justified it by appealing to the addresses in its favour, and Parliament was acting in a perfectly proper manner in advising his Majesty to exercise his constitutional prerogative of dissolving the House of Commons, and ascertaining the true sense of the constituencies. In Scotland the sense of the electors upon the question of an Union had been taken at an election. Why should not the same course be adopted in Ireland? Whatever benefits might result from the Union if it were carried in concurrence with the opinion of the people, it was sure to prove disastrous if it was against it. A dissolution on the question would be 'a sound and safe measure,' and no disturbance was likely to follow from it. 'Every act necessary to secure the public peace, and to arm the Executive Government with power to that effect, had passed the House. The supplies had been granted, the Mutiny Bill had passed, the Martial Law Bill was agreed to. Under these circumstances the measure was not dangerous; under every consideration it was just.' The Government, however, succeeded in defeating the motion by 150 to 104.[1]

Large classes of manufacturers were at this time seriously alarmed, and the arguments and great authority of Foster had profoundly affected them. Many petitions from them came in, and representatives of several manufactures were heard at the bar of the House. In England the delay caused by these proceedings seems to have excited some complaint, and Lord Castlereagh wrote that he had received letters intimating that the Irish Government were not pressing on the question with sufficient rapidity. He urged, however, that it was impossible, with any propriety or decency, to prevent persons whose private interests were really affected by the measure, from being heard

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 212, 213; Grattan's *Speeches*, iii. 411–413.

at the bar; that the conduct of the Opposition could not as yet be fairly imputed to the mere object of delay, and that imprudent precipitation might have the worst effect. It must be considered, he said, 'that we have a minority consisting of 120 members, well combined and united; that many of them are men of the first weight and talent in the House; that thirty-seven of them are members for counties; that great endeavours have been used to inflame the kingdom; that petitions from twenty-six counties have been procured; that the city of Dublin is almost unanimous against it; and with such an Opposition, so circumstanced and supported, it is evident much management must be used.'[1]

The cotton manufacturers were believed to be the most menaced, and their claims were pressed with much persistence, both from Belfast and Cork. This manufacture ranked in Ireland next to that of linen; the value annually manufactured was estimated at 600,000*l.* or 700,000*l.*, and from 30,000 to 40,000 persons were employed in it. About 130,000*l.* worth of cotton, chiefly fustians, was imported from England, but the manufacture of calico and muslins was purely Irish, and was guarded by a prohibitory duty of from thirty to fifty per cent. It was believed that a sudden reduction of the duty to ten per cent. would lead to a complete displacement of the calicoes and muslins of Ireland by those of England. After some hesitation, the Government consented to postpone this reduction for seven years; and by this concession, it did much to mitigate the opposition.[2]

The commercial clauses were now the only ones that were contested with much seriousness, for the leading members of the Opposition in the later stages of the discussion seldom took part in the debates, and made no efforts to amend a scheme which they found themselves unable to delay or reject. The debate on March 19, on the commercial clauses, however, was very thorough, the Government plans being powerfully defended by John Beresford and Castlereagh, and attacked with great elaboration by Grattan and Foster. Both of these Opposition speakers adopted a frankly protectionist line, maintaining that the diminution or abolition of protecting duties on some seventy articles, and the increased competition with England, that would follow the Union,

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 205, 206.
[2] Ibid. iii. 216, 217; *Castlereagh Correspondence*, iii. 251–253.

must arrest the growth of native manufactures, which had been during the last years so remarkable, and must end by making England the almost exclusive manufacturing centre of the Empire. Much, however, of their very able speeches was devoted to pointing out the general demerits of the Union; the turpitude of the means by which it was being carried, and its opposition to the wishes of the people. The language of Foster was extremely virulent. In a skilful and bitterly sarcastic passage, he described the account of the transaction which a future historian, who 'had not our means of information,' was likely to give. He would say that when the scheme was first proposed, the nation revolted against it, and the Parliament rejected it, but that the Minister persevered; that without a dissolution, he changed, by the operation of the Place Bill, a great part of the House of Commons; that he set up the Protestant against the Catholic, and the Catholic against the Protestant; the people against the Parliament, and the Parliament against the people; that he used the influence of the absentee, to overpower the resident; that he bought the peerage, and made the liberality with which the House of Commons granted its supplies, an argument for its abolition; that at a time when the rebellion was wholly suppressed, and when only a few local disturbances remained, martial law was extended over the whole island, and the country occupied beyond all previous example with a great army; that dismissals took place to such an extent, that there was not a placeman in the minority, and all honours were concentrated in the majority; and finally that many sheriffs appointed by Government, refused to convene the counties to petition Parliament, lest the voice of the people should be fairly heard. 'Such,' said Foster, 'might be the account of the historian who could judge from appearances only. We who live at the time would, to be sure, state it otherwise were we to write.'[1]

This was the language of a skilful rhetorician, and of a bitter opponent. It is interesting to compare it with that which was employed about the same time by a very honest and intelligent member of the House, who was himself, in principle, in favour of the Union. 'I am an Unionist,' wrote Edgeworth to his friend Erasmus Darwin, 'but I vote and speak against the Union now

[1] This speech is published as a pamphlet.

proposed to us. . . . It is intended to force this measure down the throats of the Irish, though five-sixths of the nation are against it. Now, though I think such an Union as would identify the nations, so that Ireland should be as Yorkshire to Great Britain, would be an excellent thing; yet I also think that the good people of Ireland ought to be *persuaded* of this truth, and not be dragooned into submission. The Minister avows that seventy-two boroughs are to be compensated, i.e. bought by the people of Ireland with one million and a half of their own money; and he makes this legal by a small majority, made up chiefly of these very borough members. When thirty-eight county members out of sixty-four are against the measure, and twenty-eight counties out of thirty-two have petitioned against it, this is such abominable corruption, that it makes our parliamentary sanction worse than ridiculous.'[1]

The Government carried two divisions by majorities of 42 and 47. On the critical question of the compensation to borough owners, the Opposition abstained from taking the sense of the House,[2] though they dilated with much bitterness on the inconsistency of a Government which represented the country as staggering on the verge of bankruptcy, and then asked a vote of nearly a million and a half, in order to carry a measure which they did not dare to submit to the judgment of the constituencies.

Almost at the last moment, however, a new and considerable excitement was caused by Sir John Macartney, who unexpectedly revived, in connection with the Union, the old question of the tithe of agistment, which had slumbered peacefully since the days of George II. He reminded the House that the exemption

[1] *Life of Edgeworth*, ii. 230, 231. Writing on the subject in 1817, Edgeworth said: 'It is but justice to Lord Cornwallis and Lord Castlereagh to give it as my opinion, that they *began* this measure with sanguine hopes that they could convince the reasonable part of the community that a cordial Union between the two countries would essentially advance the interests of both. When, however, the Ministry found themselves in a minority, and that a spirit of general opposition was rising in the country, a member of the House, who had been long practised in parliamentary intrigues, had the audacity to tell Lord Castlereagh from his place that, 'if he did not employ the *usual means of persuasion* on the members of the House, he would fail in his attempt, and that the sooner he set about it the better.' This advice was followed, and it is well known what benches were filled with the proselytes that had been made by *the convincing arguments* which obtained a majority.' (Ibid. p. 232.)

[2] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 212.

of pasturage from tithes did not rest upon any law, but that the claim of the clergy had been abandoned in consequence of a resolution of the House of Commons in 1735, which pronounced it to be new and mischievous, and calculated to encourage popery, and which directed that all legal methods should be taken for resisting it. By the Union, Macartney said, the effect of this resolution would cease, and the clergy would be able, without obstruction, to claim additional tithes to the amount of one million a year. The alarm excited by this prospect among the graziers was so great, that the Government hastily introduced and carried a Bill making tithes of agistment illegal.[1]

On March 28, the articles of the Union had passed through both Houses, and they were transmitted to England, accompanied by the resolutions in favour of the measure, and by a joint address of both Houses to the King, and the Irish Parliament then adjourned for nearly six weeks, in order to leave full time for them to be carried through the British Parliament, after which they were to be turned into a Bill. The recess passed in Ireland without serious disturbance. Cornwallis, in a passage which I have already quoted, expressed his belief that at least half of the majority who voted for the Union would have been delighted if it could still be defeated; he said that he was afraid of mentioning a proposal for amalgamating the two Ordnance establishments, lest the probable diminution of patronage should alarm his friends, but he had no doubt that if the Union plan came back from England unaltered, it would pass, and he did not believe that there was much strong feeling against it in the country. If there had been any change in public feeling, he thought it was rather favourable than the reverse, and Dublin, though very hostile, remained tranquil. 'The word Union,' he wrote, 'will not cure the evils of this wretched country. It is a necessary preliminary, but a great deal more must be done.'[2]

In the English Parliament there was not much opposition to be feared. The power of the Government in both Houses was supreme, and there was little or nothing of novelty in the argu-

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 216, 220, 221; 40 Geo. III. c. 23.

[2] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 228–231.

ments that were advanced. It has been justly remarked, as a conspicuous instance of the fallibility of political prescience, that the special danger to the Constitution which was feared from the influx of a considerable Irish element into the British Parliament, was an enormous increase of the power of the Crown and of each successive Administration. 'It appears to me evident,' said Grey, 'that ultimately, at least, the Irish members will afford a certain accession of force to the party of every Administration,' and 'that their weight will be thrown into the increasing scale of the Crown.' In order to guard against this danger, Grey proposed that the Irish representation should be reduced to eighty-five, and that the English representation should, at the same time, be rendered more popular by the disfranchisement of forty decayed boroughs. Wilberforce, though in general favourable to the Union, shared the fears of Grey, and acknowledged that the Irish element 'could not fail to be a very considerable addition to the influence of the Crown;' and although Pitt believed the danger to be exaggerated, he acknowledged it to be a real one, and attempted to meet it by a clause limiting to twenty the Irish placemen in the House of Commons.[1] It need scarcely be added, that the influence of the Irish representation has proved the exact opposite of what was predicted. A majority of Irish members turned the balance in favour of the great democratic Reform Bill of 1832, and from that day there has been scarcely a democratic measure which they have not powerfully assisted. When, indeed, we consider the votes that they have given, the principles they have been the means of introducing into English legislation, and the influence they have exercised on the tone and character of the House of Commons, it is probably not too much to say that their presence in the British Parliament has proved the most powerful of all agents in accelerating the democratic transformation of English politics.

On the side of the supporters of the Union, there was, at least, equal fallibility. Pitt himself, in discussing the amount of the Irish representation, expressed his hope and expectation that the two countries would be so completely identified by the measure, that it would be a matter of little importance in what

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxxv. 47, 48, 98–101, 116.

proportion the representatives were assigned to one or other part of the United Empire. 'Let this Union take place,' said Lord Hawkesbury, 'and all Irish party will be extinguished. There will then be no parties but the parties of the British Empire.'[1]

The most formidable attack was made by Grey, who moved an address to the King that proceedings on the Union should be suspended till the sentiments of the people of Ireland respecting it had been ascertained. He observed that it was a remarkable fact, that the great majority of the constituencies which were considered sufficiently important to send representatives to the Imperial Parliament, had shown a determined hostility to the Union, and he summed up with great power the arguments on this point, which had been abundantly employed in Ireland. The petitions in favour of the Union, he said, had been clandestinely obtained, chiefly by the direct influence of the Lord Lieutenant; they only bore about 3,000 signatures, and some of them merely prayed that the measure should be discussed. The petitions against it were not obtained by solicitation, but at public assemblies, of which legal notice had been given, and 107,000[2] persons signed them. Twenty-seven counties had petitioned against the measure. Dublin petitioned against it, under its great seal. Drogheda, and many other important towns, took the same course. In the county of Down, 17,000 respectable, independent men had petitioned against the Union, while there were only 415 signatures to the counter petition. The great majority against it consisted 'not of fanatics, bigots, and Jacobins, but of the most respectable in every class of the community.' There were 300 members in the Irish House of Commons. '120 of these strenuously opposed the measure, among whom were two-thirds of the county members, the representatives of the city of Dublin, and of almost all the towns which it is proposed shall send members to the Imperial Parliament. 162 voted in favour of the Union. Of these, 116 were placemen—some of them were English generals on the Staff, without a foot of ground in Ireland, and completely dependent upon Government. . . . All persons holding offices

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxxv. 43, 114.

[2] The *Parl. Hist.* says 707,000, but I have already given my reasons for believing this to be a misprint.

under Government, even the most intimate friends of the Minister, if they hesitated to vote as directed, were stripped of all their employments. . . . Other arts were had recourse to, which, though I cannot name in this place, all will easily conjecture. A Bill framed for preserving the purity of Parliament had been abused, and no less than sixty-three seats had been vacated by their holders having received nominal offices.' Could it be doubted, he asked, in the face of such facts, that the legislative Union was being forced through, contrary to the plain wish of the Irish nation, contrary to the real wish even of the Irish Parliament?[1]

Pitt's reply to these representations appears to have been exceedingly empty, consisting of little more than a denunciation of the Jacobinism, which would appeal from the deliberate judgment of Parliament to 'primary assemblies,' swayed by factious demagogues. The resolution of Grey was rejected by 236 votes to 30, but his case remained, in all essential points, unshaken, though something was said in the course of this and subsequent debates, and though something more might have been said to qualify it. His figures are not all perfectly accurate, and Pitt asserted that the number of members who held offices under Government in the Union majority, was enormously exaggerated, and was, in fact, not more than fifty-eight.[2] As we have clearly seen, corrupt and selfish motives were very far from being exclusively on the side of the Union, and opinion in Ireland was both more divided and more acquiescent than Grey represented. It was said, probably with truth, that the violence of the opposition in the country had greatly gone down, and in large districts, and among large classes, there was a silence and a torpor which indicated, at least, a complete absence of active and acute hostility. No one who reads the letters of the bishops can doubt that the measure had many Catholic well-wishers, and a much larger section of the Catholic population, as well as a great proportion of the Presbyterians, appear to have viewed it with perfect indifference.

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxxv. 59–61.

[2] Ibid. 119. For fuller statistics of the number of placemen, see pp. 404, 405. The number 116 appears to have been mentioned by a speaker in the Irish Parliament; but it was either a mere random statement, or was arrived at by counting Queen's Counsel and others, over whom the Government had no real control.

It was said, too, that the balance of landed property was in its favour, and if this estimate is based merely on the extent of property, the assertion is probably true. The Irish House of Lords comprised the largest landowners in the country, and Lord Castlereagh sent to England a computation, showing that in the two Irish Houses, the landed property possessed by the supporters of the Union was valued at 955,700*l.* a year, and that of its opponents at only 329,500*l.*[1] Considering, however, the attitude of the counties, it is not probable that any such proportion existed among the independent and uninfluenced landlords outside the Parliament.

The only serious danger to be encountered in England was from the jealousy of the commercial classes, and their opposition appears to have been almost exclusively directed against the clause which permitted the importation of English wool into Ireland. Cornwallis had, however, warned the Government that so much importance was attached to this provision in Ireland, that if it was rejected the whole Bill would probably fall through,[2] and Pitt exerted all his influence in its support. Wilberforce was on this question the leading representative of the English woollen manufacturers, but the clause was carried by 133 to 58; and the woollen manufacturers were equally unsuccessful in an attempt to obtain a prolongation of protection similar to that which had been granted to the calico manufacturers in Ireland. In the House of Lords the whole question was again debated at some length, but the minority never exceeded, and only once attained twelve. Lord Downshire, who sat in the British House of Lords as Earl of Hillsborough, spoke strongly in opposition. He said that before 1782 he had been favourable to a legislative Union, but that his opinion had wholly changed. Since 1782, 'Ireland had flourished in a degree beyond all former precedent.' The Irish Parliament had shown by abundant sacrifices its intense and undivided loyalty. He anticipated the worst consequences from the removal from Ireland of many of the most important men of influence and property, who had been resident among their people, and who were firm friends

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 224. This is exclusive of the absentee peers, whose properties were said to be divided on the question in the proportion of 102,500*l.* to 29,000*l.* The bishops' properties were counted 80,000*l.* for, and 6,000*l.* against the Union.

[2] Ibid. iii. 231.

to the British connection. Even apart from these considerations, he said, he could not support the Union when twenty-six out of the thirty-two counties had petitioned against it, twelve of them being unanimous, and when ten great corporations had set their seals of office to similar petitions; nor could he be blind to the fact that 'the members of the Irish House of Commons, who opposed this measure, were men of the first talents, respectability, and fortune, while those who supported it were men notoriously under the influence of the Crown.'[1] Lord Moira, on the other hand, who in the preceding year had been one of the most vehement opponents, and who had voted by proxy against the Union in the Irish House of Lords, now withdrew his opposition. He could have wished, he said, that the opinion of the Irish people had been ascertained upon a broader basis, and that something more distinct had been held out to the Catholics, but the measure appeared to him liberal in nearly all its details, and the Irish Catholics had much to hope from the enlightened dispositions of an Imperial Parliament.[2]

The resolutions agreed to by the English Houses, and their joint address to the King, arrived in Ireland on May 12, and the Irish Parliament speedily occupied itself with the final stages of the measure. Pitt in one of his last speeches had expressed his opinion, that no question had been ever so amply and so exhaustively discussed in any Legislature as the Irish Union; but the discussion now began to flag. There were still several points of complexity and difficulty, but both sides felt that the battle had been fought and won, and it was evident that there was no longer any serious opposition to be feared. The selection of the thirty-four boroughs which were to send representatives into the Imperial Parliament, was settled without dispute, on the principle of choosing those which paid the largest sums in hearth money and window tax; and it is a striking illustration of the state of the Irish representation, that only twelve of these boroughs were really open.[3] The countervailing duties were adjusted with equal facility, and a separate Bill was introduced

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxxv. 193–195.

[2] Ibid. xxxv. 170, 171. Lord Moira joined, however, by proxy in the second and final protest of Irish peers against the measure, though he confined his assent to three out of eleven reasons. (*Annual Register*, 1800, p. 202.)

[3] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 233–235.

and carried, settling the manner of the election to the Imperial Parliament. The representative peers were to be at once chosen by their brother peers, but with this exception no election was to take place at the Union, and the constituencies had therefore no immediate opportunity of expressing their judgment of their representatives. Where the representation was unchanged, the sitting members were to pass at once into the Imperial Parliament. Where the representation was curtailed, one of the two sitting members was to be selected by lot, and by the same Bill the order of the rotation of the spiritual peers was fixed.[1] The Union resolutions were cast into the form of a Bill, and on May 21, the House, by 160 votes to 100, gave leave for its introduction, and it was at once read a first time. George Ponsonby, who chiefly led the Opposition, acknowledged in a short, discouraged speech, that he had no hope of shaking the majority, but he said that he would fulfil his duty, and oppose the measure to the end.[2]

On the 26th, the Bill was read a second time, and on the motion for its committal, Grattan made a long, eloquent, but most inflammatory speech. He asserted that 'at a time of national debility and division,' the Ministers were forcing a Bill for the destruction of Irish liberty and of the Irish Constitution, through Parliament in the teeth of the declared sense of the country, and 'by the most avowed corruption, threats, and stratagems, accompanied by martial law.' He enumerated the several grounds of his charge, and accused the majority of employing the power that had been entrusted to them to preserve the settled order of things, for the purpose of introducing a new order of things, making government a question of strength and not of opinion, and eradicating the great fundamental and ancient principles of public security, as effectually as the most unscrupulous Jacobins. He predicted that anarchy, and not order, would be the result; that Government in Ireland would be fatally discredited, and would lose all its moral force. He traversed with burning eloquence the old arguments against the revenue clauses and the commercial clauses, predicting that the Irish contribution would prove beyond the capacities of the country; that rapidly increasing debt, speedy bankruptcy, and full English taxation, were in store for Ireland; that Irish

[1] 40 Geo. III. c. 29. [2] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 238, 239.

manufactures and commerce would wither with Irish liberty, and that military government would prevail. He accused the dominant faction in Ireland of having produced by their misgovernment all the calamities of the late rebellion, and he denounced, in language of extreme and ungovernable violence, the assertion that, 'after a mature consideration, the people had pronounced their judgment in favour of the Union.' Of that assertion, he said, 'not one single syllable has any existence in fact or in the appearance of fact. I appeal to the petitions of twenty-one counties publicly convened, and to the other petitions of other counties numerously signed, and to those of the great towns and cities. To affirm that the judgment of a nation is erroneous, may mortify, but to assert that she has said aye, when she has pronounced no . . . to make the falsification of her sentiments the foundation of her ruin, . . . to affirm that her Parliament, Constitution, liberty, honour, property, are taken away by her own authority,' exhibits an effrontery that can only excite 'astonishment and disgust,' 'whether the British Minister speaks in gross and total ignorance of the truth, or in shameless and supreme contempt for it.'

The concluding passages of the speech were in a different strain, and pointed clearly to the belief that, although the Union was inevitable, it would not be permanent. 'The Constitution may, *for a time*, be so lost—the character of the country cannot be so lost. The Ministers of the Crown may, at length, find that it is not so easy to put down for ever an ancient and a respectable nation by abilities, however great, by power and corruption, however irresistible. Liberty may repair her golden beams, and with redoubled heart animate the country.' Neither the cry of loyalty, nor the cry of the connection, nor the cry of disaffection will, in the end, avail against the principle of liberty. 'I do not give up the country. I see her in a swoon, but she is not dead; though in her tomb she lies helpless and motionless, still there is on her lips a spirit of life, and on her cheek a glow of beauty.

> Thou art not conquered; beauty's ensign yet
> Is crimson in thy lips and in thy cheeks,
> And death's pale flag is not advanced there.

[1] Grattan's *Speeches*, iv. 1–23.

Such language was described by Lord Castlereagh as a direct appeal to rebellion, or at least as a kind of 'prophetical treason,' and it was a fair, and by no means an extreme specimen of the kind of language which was employed by the leaders of the Opposition. Goold, Plunket, Bushe, Saurin, Lord Corry, Ponsonby, Foster, were all men of high private character; and some of them were men of very eminent abilities and attainments, of great social position, of great parliamentary influence and experience. They all used the same kind of language as Grattan. They all described the Union as a measure which could never have been imposed on Ireland if the country had not been weakened and divided by the great recent rebellion, and occupied by a great English army. They all asserted that it was being carried contrary to the clearly expressed wishes of the constituencies, and by shameful and extensive corruption, and they all predicted the worst consequences from its enactment.

Such prophecies had a great tendency to fulfil themselves, and the language of the Opposition went far towards forming the later opinions of the country. In Parliament, however, it had no effect. The House was languid, and tired of the subject. Many of the members were absent, and in two divisions that were taken on the committal, the Government carried their points by 118 to 73, and by 124 to 87. Even in debate the remarkable ability, and still more remarkable dignity and self-control, displayed by Lord Castlereagh, enabled him to hold his own.[1] Beyond the limits of Parliament there were undoubtedly many men, chiefly of the Established Church, who still worshipped with a passionate enthusiasm the ideal of 1782, and who endured all the pangs of despairing patriotism as they watched the progress of its eclipse. But the great mass of the Irish people were animated by no such feelings. There was no movement, indeed, to support the Government. There is no real reason to believe, that if the free constituencies had been consulted by a dissolution, they would have reversed the judgment expressed by their representatives and by their petitions. But the movement of petitioning had wholly flagged. Demonstrations seem to have almost ceased, and there were absolutely

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 239–243.

none of the signs which are invariably found when a nation struggles passionately against what it deems an impending tyranny, or rallies around some institution which it really loves. The country had begun to look with indifference or with a languid curiosity to the opening of a new chapter of Irish history, and it was this indifference which made it possible to carry the Union. At one moment, it is true, there were grave fears that a movement for petitioning would spread through the militia and yeomanry, but the dismissal of Lord Downshire completely checked it, and in the last and most critical phases of the struggle the Opposition found themselves almost wholly unsupported by any strong feeling in the nation.

The letters of Cornwallis are full of evidence of this apathy. 'The country,' he writes, 'is perfectly quiet, and cannot in general be said to be adverse to the Union.' 'The Opposition . . . admit the thing to be over, and that they have no chance either in or out of Parliament.' 'The city is perfectly quiet, and has shown no sensation on the subject of Union since the recommencement of business after the adjournment.' 'Notwithstanding all reports, you may be assured that the Union is not generally unpopular, and it is astonishing how little agitation it occasions even in Dublin, which is at present more quiet than it has been for many years.'[1] 'I hardly think,' wrote Cooke to Lord Grenville, 'we shall have any serious debate hereafter. Many of our opponents are on the wing. There is no sensation on the subject in town or country.'[2] The Opposition were not unconscious of the fact, and at least one of their conspicuous members seems to have complained bitterly of the indifference of the nation.[3]

Their leaders desired to place upon the journals of the House a full record of their case, and they accordingly drew up

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 235, 237, 239, 247. The dates of these letters are May 18, 21, 22, June 4, 1800.

[2] Cooke to Grenville, May 22, 1800. (*Grenville MSS.*)

[3] Mr. Goold 'lamented that the public feeling was not sufficiently alive to the question of Union. He lamented that the citizens of Dublin did not exhibit in their countenances the despondency of defeated liberty, and though it was evident that the public sentiment did not keep pace with or sympathise with the opposition within that House, and though that opposition should gradually diminish, he would never acknowledge the triumph of the Minister, and to the last moment of its discussion would glory in his efforts to repel a measure which he conceived fatal to the liberties of his country.' (*Dublin Evening Post*, May 17, 1800.)

a long, skilful, and very elaborate address to the King, embodying in a clear and forcible form most of the arguments and facts which have been given in the foregoing pages.[1] A single paragraph may here be noticed, on account of the light that it throws on the spirit in which the opposition to the Union was conducted. Having pointed to the efficacy and rapidity with which the resident Parliament had exerted itself for the suppression of the recent rebellion, the writers argued that no non-resident Parliament would be likely to combat disaffection with equal promptitude and equal energy, and predicted that the Union would be followed by a removal or abasement of the men of property and respectability, which would 'leave room for political agitators, and men of talents without principle or property, to disturb and irritate the public mind.' This indeed appears to have been one of the guiding ideas of Grattan, who had before argued that a measure which took the government of the country out of the hands of the upper orders, and compelled them 'to proclaim and register their own incapacity in the rolls of their own Parliament,' would ultimately give a fatal impulse to the worst forms of Irish Jacobinism.

This address was moved in the House of Commons, by Lord Corry, on June 6, and defeated by 135 to 77, and the Bill then passed quickly through its remaining stages. In the last stage, Dobbs, in whom a religious enthusiasm amounting to monomania was strangely blended with a very genuine and reasonable patriotism, made a wild and frantic speech, declaring that 'the independence of Ireland was written in the immutable records of Heaven;' that the Messiah was about to appear on the holy hill of Armagh, and that although the Union might pass the House, it could never become operative, as it was impossible that a kingdom which Revelation showed to be under the special favour of Heaven, could be absorbed in one of the ten kingdoms typified in the image of Daniel.[2] After a bitter protest from

[1] This very remarkable protest will be found in Grattan's *Speeches*, iv. 24–36, in the Appendix to Grattan's *Life*, vol. v., and in Plowden.

[2] There is a curious broadside in the British Museum, purporting to be a report of Dobbs' speech on June 7. See, too, *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 249; Coote, pp. 498, 499. In the debate on February 6, Dobbs had concluded his speech in a similar strain, though the earlier part of it was perfectly sane and even powerful. I have given (vol. iv. p. 508), an outline of Dobbs' prophetical views.

Plunket, a great part of the Opposition seceded, to avoid witnessing the final scene, and the Union passed through the Irish Commons. 'The greatest satisfaction,' wrote Cornwallis, 'is that it occasions no agitation, either in town or country, and indeed one of the violent anti-Union members complained last night in the House, that the people had deserted them.'[1] The Compensation Bill speedily followed, and was but little resisted. In the Upper House, Lord Farnham and Lord Bellamont strongly urged the excessive amount of the contribution to be paid by Ireland under the Union arrangement,[2] and there were two divisions in which the Government had majorities of fifty-nine and fifty-two. The twenty peers who had before protested, placed on the journals of the House a second and somewhat fuller protest. The Bill was then sent to England, where it passed speedily through both Houses, and it received the royal sanction on the first of August, the anniversary of the accession of the Hanoverian dynasty to the British throne. The King, in proroguing the British Parliament, declared that the Union was a measure on which his wishes had long been earnestly bent, and he pronounced it to be the happiest event of his reign.

The other formalities connected with it, need not detain us. The Great Seal of Britain was delivered up and defaced, and a new Seal of the Empire was given to the Chancellor. A change was introduced into the royal titles, and into the royal arms, and the occasion was made use of to drop the idle and offensive title of 'King of France,' which the English sovereigns had hitherto maintained. A new standard, combining the three orders of St. George, St. Andrew, and St. Patrick, was hoisted in the capitals of England, Scotland, and Ireland. The noble building in which the Irish Parliament had held its sessions, was soon after bought by the Bank of Ireland. It is a curious and significant fact, that the Government in consenting to this sale made a secret stipulation, that the purchasers should subdivide and alter the chambers in which the two Houses had met, so as

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 250.

[2] A long and able letter from Lord Farnham to Lord Grenville on this point, will be found in the *Grenville MSS.* (June 20, 1800). Lord Farnham stated, that for the year ending Jan. 5, 1799, the permanent taxes of Great Britain were upwards of twenty-six millions, those of Ireland but two millions.

to destroy as much as possible their old appearance.[1] It was feared that disquieting ghosts might still haunt the scenes that were consecrated by so many memories.

I have related with such fullness the history of this memorable conflict that the reader will, I trust, have no difficulty in estimating the full strength of the case on each side; the various arguments, motives, and influences that governed the event. A very few words of comment are all that need be added. If the Irish Parliament had consisted mainly, or to any appreciable extent, of men who were disloyal to the connection, and whose sympathies were on the side of rebellion or with the enemies of England, the English Ministers would, I think, have been amply justified in employing almost any means to abolish it. It is scarcely possible to over-estimate the danger that would arise if the vast moral, legislative, and even administrative powers which every separate Legislature must necessarily possess, were exercised in any near and vital part of the British Empire, by men who were disloyal to its interests. To place the government of a country by a voluntary and deliberate act in the hands of dishonest and disloyal men, is perhaps the greatest crime that a public man can commit; a crime which, in proportion to the strength and soundness of national morality, must consign those who are guilty of it to undying infamy. If, however, a Parliament which was once loyal has assumed a disloyal character, the case is a different one, and the course of a wise statesman will be determined by a comparison of conflicting dangers. But in a time of such national peril as England was passing through in the great Napoleon war, when the whole existence and future of the Empire were trembling most doubtfully in the

[1] Among the *Colchester Papers* there is a draft of a despatch to Lord Pelham, on the proposal of the Bank of Ireland to buy the Parliament House. At the end there is added, 'Private.' 'I am given to understand confidentially that the Bank of Ireland would in such case subdivide what was the former House of Commons into several rooms for the check offices, and would apply what was the House of Lords to some other use which would leave nothing of its former appearance.' In the same collection there is a letter from Abbot to Lord Hardwicke, sanctioning the purchase. 'It should, however, be again privately stipulated,' he says, 'that the two chambers of Parliament shall be effectually converted to such uses as shall preclude their being again used upon any contingency as public debating rooms. It would be desirable also, to bargain that they should render the outside uniform, and in the change of appropriation reconcile the citizens to it, in some degree, by making the edifice more ornamental.' (Feb. 1, 1802.)

balance, history would not, I think, condemn with severity any means that were required to withdraw the direction of Irish resources from disloyal hands. In such moments of agony and crisis, self-preservation becomes the supreme end, and the transcendent importance of saving the Empire from destruction suspends and eclipses all other rules. But it cannot be too clearly understood or too emphatically stated, that the legislative Union was not an act of this nature. The Parliament which was abolished was a Parliament of the most unqualified loyalists; it had shown itself ready to make every sacrifice in its power for the maintenance of the Empire, and from the time when Arthur O'Connor and Lord Edward Fitzgerald passed beyond its walls, it probably did not contain a single man who was really disaffected. The dangers to be feared on this side were not imminent, but distant; and the war and the rebellion created not a necessity, but an opportunity.

It must be added, that it was becoming evident that the relation between the two countries, established by the Constitution of 1782, could not have continued unchanged. It is true, indeed, as I have already contended, that in judging such relations, too much stress is usually placed on the nature of the legislative machinery, and too little on the dispositions of the men who work it. But even with the best dispositions, the Constitution of 1782 involved many and grave probabilities of difference, and the system of a separate and independent Irish Parliament, with an Executive appointed and instructed by the English Cabinet, and depending on English party changes, was hopelessly anomalous, and could not fail some day to produce serious collision. It was impossible that the exact poise could have been permanently maintained, and it was doubtful whether the centripetal tendency in the direction of Union, or the centrifugal tendency in the direction of Separation, would ultimately prevail. Sooner or later the corrupt borough ascendency must have broken down, and it was a grave question what was to succeed it. Grattan indeed believed that in the Irish gentry and yeomanry, who formed and directed the volunteers, there would be found a strong body of loyal and independent political feeling, and that the government might pass out of the hands of a corrupt aristo-

cracy, of whose demerits he was very sensible,[1] without falling into those of a democracy from which he expected nothing but confiscation and anarchy.[2] He relied upon the decadence of the sectarian spirit in Europe, and upon the tried loyalty of the Catholic gentry and bishops, to prevent a dangerous antagonism of Protestants and Catholics, and he imagined that an Irish Parliament, fired with the spirit of nationality, could accomplish or complete the great work of fusing into one the two nations which inhabited Ireland. But the United Irishmen had poisoned the springs of political life. The French Revolution had given popular feeling a new ply and new ideals; an enormous increase of disloyalty and religious animosity had taken place during the last years of the century, and it added immensely to the danger of the democratic Catholic suffrage, which the Act of 1793 had called into existence.

This was the strongest argument for hurrying on the Union; but when all due weight is assigned to it, it does not appear to me to have justified the policy of Pitt. On the morrow of the complete suppression of the rebellion, the danger of the Parliament being conquered by the party of disloyalty or anarchy cannot have been imminent; and if it had become so, there can be little doubt that the governing, the loyal, and the propertied classes in Ireland would have themselves called for an Union. It is quite certain that in 1799, it was not desired or asked for by the classes who were most vitally interested in the preservation of the existing order of property and law, and who had the best means of knowing the true condition of the country. The measure was an English one, introduced prematurely before it had been demanded by any section of Irish opinion, carried without a dissolution and by gross corruption, in opposition to the majority of the free constituencies and to the great preponderance of the unbribed intellect of Ireland. Under such conditions it was scarcely likely to prove successful.

It may, however, be truly said that there have been many instances of permanent and beneficial national consolidations

[1] 'I am no friend to the Irish aristocracy, and though I think what Grattan said of them (that they are only fit to carry claret to a chamber-pot), is true, I think better of them than of any Irish democracy that could be formed.' (R. Griffith to Pelham, Oct. 8, 1798.)

[2] See vol. vi. pp. 384–386, 469, 470. In a letter to an Italian gentleman about the Government of the Cisalpine Republic, Grattan said: 'She should have a representative chosen by the people who have some property, for I don't like personal representation. It is anarchy, and must become slavery.' (Grattan's *Life*, v. 215.)

effected with equal or greater violence to opinion. The history of every leading kingdom in Europe is in a large degree a history of successive forcible amalgamations. England herself is no exception, and there was probably more genuine and widespread repugnance to the new order of things in Wales at the time of her conquest, and in Scotland at the time of her Union, than existed in Ireland in 1800. A similar statement may be made of many of the changes that accompanied or followed the Napoleonic wars, and in a very eminent degree of the reunion of the subjugated Southern States to the great American republic. At a still later period the unification of Germany, which is probably the most important political achievement of our own generation, was certainly not accomplished in accordance with the genuine and spontaneous wishes of every kingdom that was absorbed. If the Union had few active partisans, it was at least received by great sections of the Irish people with an indifference and an acquiescence which prompt, skilful, and energetic legislation might have converted into cordial support. The moment, however, was critical in the extreme, and it was necessary that Irish politics should, for a time at least, take a foremost place in the decisions of the Government.

The evils to be remedied were many and glaring, and some of them had little or no connection with political controversy. There were the innumerable unlicensed whisky shops all over the country, which were everywhere the centres of crime, sedition, and conspiracy, and which many good judges considered the master curse of Ireland; the most powerful of all the influences that were sapping the morals of the nation.[1] There was the shameful non-residence of a great proportion of the

[1] There is a striking letter on this subject from John Pollock, in the *Colchester MSS.* Pollock, after describing the general connivance at these unlicensed distilleries, and the enormous evils they produced, adds: 'The greatest object that could be accomplished for Ireland, and the one that would render the minister who may accomplish it, almost the saviour of his country, would be to adopt a system that should produce good, wholesome, and comparatively cheap malt liquor, and put spirits beyond the reach of the common people.' (J. Pollock to Charles Abbot, Aug. 16, 1801.) See, too, a striking letter of Cooke, *Castlereagh Correspondence*, iv. 14. On the great part the whisky shop always bears in the manufacture of Irish agrarian and seditious crime, see some striking evidence of Drummond, in Smyth's *Ireland, Historical and Statistical*, iii. 67.

beneficed clergy and bishops of the Established Church, an evil which, in the opinion of Dean Warburton, contributed, in the North at least, more than almost any other cause, to open the door to the seduction of revolutionary agents. It was due to the disturbed condition of the country; to the scantiness of the Protestant population in many districts; to the low standard of public duty that everywhere prevailed, and, perhaps still more, to the want of proper residences for the clergy. It was said that out of 2,400 parishes in Ireland, not more than 400 had glebe houses, and it was part of the plan of Grenville and Pitt, while granting new privileges to the Catholics, to strengthen the civilising influence of the Established Church by the erection of churches and glebes, by enforcing more strictly ecclesiastical discipline, and by augmenting the incomes of the poorest clergy.[1] After the Union this abuse was gradually remedied, partly through the operation of an Act enforcing residence, which was passed in 1808,[2] and partly through the higher standard of clerical duty which followed in the train of the Evangelical revival.

Another, and even graver evil, which was more slowly cured, was the gross and sordid ignorance of the largest part of the population—an ignorance which brought with it, as a necessary consequence, barbarous habits and tastes, miserable agriculture, improvident marriages, an inveterate proneness to anarchy and violence. The great work of national education had not yet been taken up on any extended scale by the State, but it was manifest that State education was far more needed in Ireland than in England, as it was impossible that a Protestant Church could discharge the task of educating a Catholic population. Statesmen in Ireland had not been insensible to this want, but nearly all their schemes had been vitiated by being restricted to Protestants, or connected with proselytism, or through the inveterate jobbing that pervaded all parts of Irish life. An Act of Henry VIII. had directed the establishment of an English school in every parish in Ireland. An Act of Elizabeth, which was reinforced or extended by several subsequent laws,

[1] See Buckingham's *Courts and Cabinets*, iii. 129, and a letter, written apparently on the authority of Lord Grenville, about the intentions of Pitt, quoted by Sir J. Hippisley, *Substance of a Speech*, May 18, 1810, p. 15.

[2] 48 Geo. III. cap. 66.

instituted in every diocese a free diocesan school under the direction of a Protestant clergyman. Under James I. and his two successors seven important 'royal schools' were founded and endowed, as well as the first of the four blue-coat schools in Ireland. Shortly after the Act of Settlement, Erasmus Smith devoted a considerable property to the endowment of Protestant day schools and grammar schools, and they soon spread over a great part of Ireland. In 1733 the Irish Parliament instituted the Charter Schools, which were intended to bring up the poorest and most neglected Catholic children as Protestants, and at the same time to give them a sound industrial education. We have seen what large sums were lavished on these schools; how signally they failed in their object, and what scandalous abuses were connected with them; and we have also seen how Orde's later scheme of national education was abandoned.

Private enterprise had no doubt done much. A writer in 1796 mentions that, in Dublin alone, there were in that year not less than fifty-four charity schools, educating 7,416 children,[1] and an immense multiplication of unendowed Catholic schools had followed the repeal of those laws against Catholic education, which were, perhaps, the worst part of the penal code.[2] But the supply of education remained very deficient in quantity, and still more in quality. By the Act of 1792, any Catholic who took the prescribed oath might compel the magistrate to license him as a teacher,[3] and great numbers of men who were not only incompetent, but notoriously disaffected, availed themselves of the privilege, and they exercised a serious and most evil influence in the rebellion. Sectarian feeling, and especially the peculiar form of Protestant feeling which grew up with the Evangelical revival, added greatly to the difficulties of the case. It was not until thirty-one years after the Union that Parliament took up efficiently, and on a large scale, the task of educating the Irish people, and by that time the country was covered with a dense, improvident, impoverished, and anarchical population, already far exceeding its natural resources, and

[1] *The Prosperity of Ireland displayed in the State of Charity Schools in Dublin*, by John Ferrar (Dublin, 1796).

[2] See Newenham's *State of Ireland*, p. xix, Appendix, pp. 34–37.

[3] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, iii. 91, 92, 449, 450.

increasing with a rapidity which foreshadowed only too surely a great impending catastrophe.[1]

There were other evils of a different kind. One of the worst results of the existence of a separate Irish Parliament, was the enormous jobbing in Government patronage, and in the dispensation of honours, that took place for the purpose of maintaining a parliamentary majority. The Irish Custom and Revenue Departments were full of highly paid offices, which naturally entailed laborious and important duties, corresponding to those which were discharged in England by hard-working secretaries and clerks. In Ireland such posts were commonly given to members of Parliament or their relatives, who treated them as sinecures, and devoted a fraction of their salaries to paying deputies to discharge their duties. I have mentioned how the great office of Master of the Rolls had long been treated as a political sinecure, and at the time of the Union it was jointly held by Lords Glandore and Carysfort, with an income estimated at 2,614*l.* a year, part of which was derived from an open sale of offices in the Court of Chancery.[2] Even the military patronage of the Lord Lieutenant had been long, to the great indignation of the army, made use of to reward political services in Parliament.[3] With the abolition of the local Parliament, these great evils gradually came to an end; and although the Union was very far from altogether purifying Government patronage, it did undoubtedly greatly improve it. The existing holders of the Mastership of the Rolls were paid off with an annuity equal to the revenues they had received; the office was turned into an efficient judgeship, and bestowed, with a somewhat increased salary, on a capable lawyer, and various unnecessary offices were, in time, suppressed. The Administration of Lord Hardwicke appears to have been especially active in restraining jobbing, and in this department, perhaps more than in any other, were the anticipations of the more honest supporters of the Union realised.

Very little, however, was done for some years to repress anarchy, and provide for the steady enforcement of law.

[1] By the census of 1831, the Irish population was 7,707,401.

[2] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 302, 303.

[3] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, iv. 85.

An Act of 1822 somewhat enlarged and strengthened the scanty provisions for the establishment of constables in every barony which the Irish Parliament had made, but the first step of capital importance was the organisation by Drummond, in 1836, of that great constabulary force which has proved, perhaps, the most valuable boon conferred by Imperial legislation upon Ireland, and which has displayed in the highest perfection, and in many evil days, the nobler qualities of the Irish character.

It was evident, however, to all sound observers at the time, and it became still more evident in the light of succeeding events, that the success or failure of the Union was likely to depend mainly on the wise and speedy accomplishment of three great kindred measures, the emancipation of the Catholics, the commutation of tithes, and the payment of the priests. It was most necessary that a change which was certain for so many reasons to offend and irritate the national pride, should be accompanied by some great and striking benefit which would appeal powerfully to the nation; and England had no commercial advantages to offer to Ireland, that were at all equivalent to those which the Union of 1707 had conferred upon Scotland. The Catholic question had risen to the foremost place in Irish politics, and it had already been made the subject of two of the most fatal blunders in the whole history of English statesmanship. By the Relief Act of 1793 a vast and utterly ignorant Catholic democracy had been admitted into the constituencies, while the grievance of disqualification was still suffered to continue through the exclusion from Parliament of a loyal and eminently respectable Catholic gentry, whose guiding and restraining political influence had never been more necessary. In 1795 the hopes of the Catholics were raised to the point of certainty, and the Irish Parliament was quite ready to gratify them, when the English Ministry recalled Lord Fitzwilliam, and drove the most energetic section of the Catholics into the arms of the United Irishmen. After the terrible years that followed, no statesmanship could have speedily restored the relation of classes and creeds that existed in 1793 or even in 1795, but a great opportunity had once more arisen, and the Sibylline books were again presented.

We have seen that it had been the first wish of Pitt and

Dundas in England,[1] and of Cornwallis in Ireland, to make Catholic emancipation a part of the Union; and when this course was found to be impracticable, there is good reason to believe that Canning recommended Pitt to drop the Union, until a period arrived when it would be possible to carry the two measures concurrently.[1] Wiser advice was probably never given, but it was not followed, and a Protestant Union was carried, with an understanding that when it was accomplished, the Ministry would introduce the measure of Catholic emancipation into an Imperial Parliament. It was this persuasion or understanding that secured the neutrality and acquiescence of the greater part of the Irish Catholics, without which, in the opinion of the very best judges, the Union could never have been carried.

These negotiations have been made the subject of much controversy, and some of their details are complicated and doubtful; but there is not, I think, any real obscurity about the main facts, though the stress which has been laid on each set of them by historians, is apt to vary greatly with the political bias of the writer. It is in the first place quite clear that the English Ministers did not give any definite pledge or promise that they would carry Catholic emancipation in the Imperial Parliament, or make its triumph a matter of life and death to the Administration. On two points only did they expressly pledge themselves. The one was, that, as far as lay in their power, they would exert the whole force of Government influence to prevent the introduction of Catholics into a separate Irish Parliament. The other was, that they would not permit any clause in the Union Act which might bar the future entry of Catholics into the Imperial Parliament; and the fourth article of the Union accordingly stated, that the present oaths and declaration were retained only 'until the Parliament of the United Kingdom shall otherwise provide.'

At the same time, from the beginning of the negotiations

[1] This was stated by Canning himself in the House of Commons (March 6, 1827): 'I remember, Sir, as well as if it happened yesterday, Mr. Pitt's showing me a letter from Lord Cornwallis, in which that noble lord said he had sounded the ground, and could carry the Union, but not the Catholic question; and I also recollect my saying, "If I were you, I would reject the one measure if distinct from the other." Mr. Pitt rebuked me, as perhaps my rashness deserved.' (*Parl. Deb.* Second Series, xvi. 1005, 1006.)

about the Union, Cornwallis, who was himself a strong advocate of Catholic emancipation, had been in close and confidential intercourse with the leading members of the Catholic body. He had discussed with them the possibility of connecting Catholic emancipation with the Union, and had reported to England that they were in favour of the Union, and that they fully approved of adjourning their own question till an Imperial Parliament had been created, on the ground that a different course would make the difficulties of carrying the Union in Ireland insuperable. They knew, however, that the disposition of Pitt and the disposition of Cornwallis were in favour of emancipation in an Imperial Parliament, and this knowledge was certainly a leading element in determining their course. In all the official arguments in favour of the Union in the early part of 1799, great stress was laid upon the fact, that the Union would make an extension of Catholic privileges possible without endangering the Irish Church and the stability of Irish property, but at the same time the utmost care was taken to avoid any language that could be construed into a pledge, or could offend the strong Protestant party in the Irish Parliament and Government.

Cooke, in the official pamphlet recommending the scheme, argued that Catholic emancipation in an Irish Parliament must ultimately prove incompatible with the maintenance of the Church Establishment, and with the security of Protestant property, but that 'if Ireland was once united to Great Britain by a legislative Union, and the maintenance of the Protestant Establishment was made a fundamental article of that Union, then the whole power of the Empire would be pledged to the Church Establishment of Ireland, and the property of the whole Empire would be pledged in support of the property of every part,' and he inferred that, as 'the Catholics could not force their claims with hostility against the whole power of Great Britain and Ireland,' there would be 'no necessary State partiality towards Protestants,' and 'an opening might be left in any plan of Union for the future admission of Catholics to additional privileges.'[1] Pitt, in his great speech in January 1799, said, 'No man can say that in the present state of things, and while Ireland remains a separate kingdom, full concessions could be made to the

[1] *Arguments for and against an Union*, pp. 29–34.

Catholics without endangering the State, and shaking the Constitution of Ireland to its centre. On the other hand, without anticipating the discussion, or the propriety of agitating the question, or saying how soon or how late it may be fit to discuss it, two propositions are indisputable. First, when the conduct of the Catholics shall be such as to make it safe for the Government to admit them to the participation of the privileges granted to those of the established religion, and when the temper of the time shall be favourable to such a measure, . . . it is obvious that such a question may be agitated in an United Imperial Parliament with much greater safety than it could be in a separate Legislature. In the second place, I think it certain, that, even for whatever period it may be thought necessary, after the Union, to withhold from the Catholics the enjoyment of these advantages, many of the objections, which at present arise out of their situation, would be removed if a Protestant Legislature were no longer separate and local, but general and Imperial.'[2] Dundas used very similar language. 'An Union,' he said, 'is likely to prove advantageous to the Catholics of both countries. . . . Should it ever be found prudent wholly to improve the condition of the great majority of the Irish nation, the English Catholics might expect to be no longer under any restraints.'[2]

The extreme and calculated vagueness of this language is very evident, and there is no doubt that Cornwallis, in accordance with his instructions, at this time carefully abstained from giving any pledge to the Catholic leaders, though they can hardly have remained ignorant of his opinion, that their admission into the Imperial Parliament would be not only a safe measure, but one which was absolutely essential to the peace of Ireland.[3] When, however, the Union scheme was defeated in the session of 1799, and when it became evident that the great body of the county members and of the Irish Protestants were against it, the Government felt that the time had come for a more decided policy. Cornwallis had warned them, that it was very doubtful whether the Catholics would remain even passive, if they had

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxxiv. 272. There are some slight verbal variations in the different reports of Pitt's speech.

[2] Speech of the Right Hon. H. Dundas, Feb. 7, 1799, p. 59.

[3] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, ii. 415. On the negotiations of Cornwallis with the Catholics in the beginning of 1799, see *Castlereagh Correspondence*, ii. 78, 79.

nothing to rely on but a mere unsupported calculation of the probable disposition of the Imperial Parliament. It was known that some leading members of the Opposition were making overtures to them, offering to support their emancipation, if they would help in defeating the Union,[1] and there was every reason to believe, that if the Catholics could be persuaded that Foster and his party had the will and the power to procure their admission into the Irish Parliament, they would declare themselves almost unanimously against the Government.[2] In the opinion both of Cornwallis and Castlereagh, it would, in that case, have been impossible to carry the Union.

Under these circumstances, Castlereagh went over to England in the autumn of 1799, by the direction of the Lord Lieutenant, to lay the case before Pitt and his colleagues; and he has himself, in a most important letter, described the result of his mission. 'I stated,' he says, 'that we had a majority in Parliament, composed of very doubtful materials: that the Protestant body was divided on the question [of the Union], with the disadvantage of Dublin and the Orange societies against us; and that the Catholics were holding back, under a doubt whether the Union would facilitate or impede their object. I stated it as the opinion of the Irish Government, that, circumstanced as the parliamentary interests and the Protestant feelings then were, the measure could not be carried if the Catholics were embarked in an active opposition to it, and that their resistance would be unanimous and zealous if they had reason to suppose that the sentiments of Ministers would remain unchanged in respect to their exclusion, while the measure of Union in itself might give them additional means of disappointing their hopes.

'I stated that several attempts had been made by leading Catholics to bring Government to an explanation, which had, of course, been evaded, and that the body, thus left to their own speculations in respect to the future influence of the Union upon their cause, were, with some exceptions, either neutral, or actual opponents—the former entertaining hopes, but not inclining to support decidedly without some encouragement from

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 52; *Castlereagh Correspondence*, ii. 132.

[2] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, ii. 276.

Government; the latter entirely hostile, from a persuasion that it would so strengthen the Protestant interest, as to perpetuate their exclusion.

'I represented that the friends of Government, by flattering the hopes of the Catholics, had produced a favourable impression in Cork, Tipperary, and Galway; but that, in proportion as his Excellency had felt the advantage of this popular support, he was anxious to be ascertained, in availing himself of the assistance which he knew was alone given in contemplation of its being auxiliary to their own views, that he was not involving Government in future difficulties with that body, by exposing them to a charge of duplicity, and he was peculiarly desirous of being secure against such a risk before he *personally* encouraged the Catholics to come forward and to afford him that assistance which he felt to be so important to the success of the measure.

'In consequence of this representation, the Cabinet took the measure into their consideration; and having been directed to attend the meeting, I was charged to convey to Lord Cornwallis the result. . . . Accordingly, I communicated to Lord Cornwallis, that the opinion of the Cabinet was favourable to the principle of the measure; that some doubt was entertained as to the possibility of admitting Catholics into some of the *higher offices*, and that Ministers apprehended considerable repugnance to the measure in many quarters, and particularly in the *highest*, but that, as far as the sentiments of the Cabinet were concerned, his Excellency need not hesitate in calling forth the Catholic support, in whatever degree he found it practicable to obtain it. . . . I certainly did not then hear any direct objection stated against the principle of the measure, by any one of the Ministers then present. You will, I have no doubt, recollect, that so far from any serious hesitation being entertained in respect to the principle, it was even discussed whether an immediate declaration to the Catholics would not be advisable, and whether an assurance should not be distinctly given them, in the event of the Union being accomplished, of their objects being submitted, with the countenance of Government, to the United Parliament, upon a peace. This idea was laid aside, principally upon a consideration that such a declaration might alienate the Protestants in both countries from the Union, in a greater degree than it

was calculated to assist the measure through the Catholics, and accordingly the instructions which I was directed to convey to Lord Cornwallis were to the following effect: that his Excellency was fully warranted in soliciting every support the Catholics could afford; that he need not apprehend, as far as the sentiments of the Cabinet were concerned, being involved in the difficulty with that body which he seemed to apprehend; that it was not thought expedient at that time, to give any direct assurance to the Catholics, but that, should circumstances so far alter as to induce his Excellency to consider such an explanation necessary, he was at liberty to state the grounds on which his opinion was formed, for the consideration of the Cabinet.

'In consequence of this communication, the Irish Government omitted no exertion to call forth the Catholics in favour of the Union. Their efforts were very generally successful, and the advantage derived from them was highly useful, particularly in depriving the Opposition of the means they otherwise would have had in the southern and western counties, of making an impression on the county members. His Excellency was enabled to accomplish his purpose without giving the Catholics any direct assurance of being gratified, and throughout the contest earnestly avoided being driven to such an expedient, as he considered a gratuitous concession after the measure as infinitely more consistent with the character of Government.'[1]

It was mainly by these assurances of the intentions of the English Cabinet, that the Catholics were restrained from throwing themselves heartily and as a body into the anti-Unionist movement in the spring of 1800, and that the overtures of Foster's party for an alliance were defeated. The transcendent importance of the result appears clearly from Lord Castlereagh's words, and it is amply confirmed by all the confidential correspondence of the Government. 'All depends on the tone of the country,' wrote Cooke; 'if we can keep that right, I believe all may do well.' The Opposition, he said, had failed 'in exciting popular resistance.' 'Our adversaries . . . know that any attempt to move Government without a general cry of popular discontent is folly.' 'If the public out of doors can be kept quiet, I think we

[1] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, iv. 8–12. This letter was written to Pitt, to remind him of what had taken place. It is dated Jan. 1, 1801.

may now do well.' 'The Opposition still hope to inflame the country, but they have not effected their purpose yet.'[1] The movement against the Union in this year was far more serious and extensive than any which the Government had been able to obtain in its favour, and many Catholics joined with the Protestants, but the great Catholic body did not throw themselves into it, and the Union was in consequence carried. 'The Catholics,' Cornwallis afterwards wrote, 'in the late political contest on the measure of Union . . . certainly had it in their power to have frustrated the views of Government, and throw the country into the utmost confusion.'[2]

In spite of the reservations that had been made, their leaders considered that their cause was won when the Lord Lieutenant was authorised to ask their assistance, on the ground that the English Cabinet was in favour of their emancipation in an Imperial Parliament. They naturally inferred that the Ministers had unanimously resolved to carry it, and they made no question of their power. They knew that the existing Government had ruled England most absolutely for seventeen years; that the personal authority of Pitt had hardly been equalled by Walpole, and had been approached by no later Minister; that the Opposition in both Houses had sunk into insignificance. Difficulties on the part of the King, and a possible postponement of their triumph, had no doubt been hinted at, but the Catholic leaders had every reason to believe that Pitt could carry his policy, and they had no reason to believe the royal objections to be insuperable. When the King prorogued the British Parliament immediately after the Union, he described himself as 'persuaded that nothing could so effectually contribute to extend to his Irish subjects the full participation of the blessings derived from the British Constitution,' as the great measure which had been carried. What, it was asked, could such language mean, but that the mass of the Irish people were speedily to be admitted to that participation, by the removal of the one disqualification that excluded them from it?

It is well known how their hopes were disappointed, and the

[1] Cooke to Grenville, Jan. 16, Feb. 14, 22, March 5, 10, 1800. (*Grenville MSS.*)

[2] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 307.

story is both a melancholy and a shameful one. Though the Catholic leaders probably knew that they had to encounter an indisposition on the part of the King, they did not know that he had already told his Ministers that he would consider his consent to Catholic emancipation a breach of his coronation oath, and that, on the appointment of Lord Cornwallis, he had expressly written to Pitt, 'Lord Cornwallis must clearly understand that no indulgence can be granted to the Catholics farther than has been, I am afraid unadvisedly, done, in former sessions.'[1] They did not know that the overtures that had been made to them were made entirely without the knowledge of the King, without any attempt to sound his disposition or to mitigate his hostility, without any resolution on the part of Pitt to make Catholic emancipation an indispensable condition of his continuing in office, without even any real unanimity in the Cabinet. At the time, indeed, when the Union was not yet carried, and when its success was very doubtful, Castlereagh had mentioned it to the Cabinet, and no one had objected; but when the Union had been safely accomplished, and Pitt, in the September of 1800, brought the Catholic question formally before his colleagues, the Chancellor, Lord Loughborough, for the first time struck a discordant note, objecting to any favour being granted to the Catholics except a commutation of tithes.

He had been staying at Weymouth with the King, and had probably convinced himself that the King's mind was as hostile as ever to the measure. He had long been notoriously aspiring to the position of 'King's friend,' which Thurlow had once held, and he had once before taken a very significant course on the question which was now pending. In 1795, when the King had consulted some leading lawyers about the compatibility of Catholic emancipation and the coronation oath, Lord Kenyon and Sir John Scott had assured the King that the alteration of the Test Act was perfectly compatible with the coronation oath; but Lord Loughborough, without definitely committing himself to the opposite opinion, had separated himself from the other lawyers, and answered much more doubtfully.[2] He now, without the knowledge of his colleagues, informed the King of the

[1] Stanhope's *Life of Pitt*, iii. Appendix, p. xvi.

[2] Campbell's *Lives of the Chancellors*, viii. 172, 173. Stanhope's *Life of Pitt*, iii. 263, 264.

intentions of the Cabinet, drew up a paper of arguments against the proposed measure, and with the anti-Catholic party, of which his relative Lord Auckland was the chief, proceeded to influence the mind of the King still more against Pitt. The Archbishops of Canterbury and of Armagh, and the Bishop of London, were all made use of to confirm the King in his opposition.

A grave embarrassment was thus thrown in the path of the Government. In the judgment of Lord Malmesbury, 'if Pitt had been provident enough to prepare the King's mind gradually, and to prove to him that the test proposed was as binding as the present oath, no difficulty could have arisen.' If, on the other hand, as Pitt apparently desired, no communication had been made to the King until Catholic emancipation, accompanied with the necessary oath for the security of the Established Church, and with matured plans for the payment of the priests, and the commutation of tithes, could have been presented to him as the deliberate and unanimous policy of his Cabinet, there is little doubt that he must have yielded. But a cabal had been raised, while the question was still unsettled, and the King at once determined upon his course. At a levee which was held on January 28, he expressed to Dundas, in the hearing of a number of gentlemen who stood by, his vehement indignation at hearing of the proposal which Lord Castlereagh had brought over from Ireland, and declared in a loud tone, that it was 'the most Jacobinical thing' he had ever heard of, and that he would reckon any man 'his personal enemy' who proposed any such measure.[1] He wrote in the same strain and with no less vehemence to the Speaker, Addington, urging him to persuade Pitt not even to mention the subject.[2]

The knowledge of the royal sentiments at once gave activity to the whole party of Auckland and Westmorland, and made an evident impression on the Cabinet. Lord Loughborough was no longer isolated. The Duke of Portland, Lord Liverpool, and even Lord Chatham, the brother of Pitt, began to veer towards the Opposition; and when Pitt wrote to the King on January 31, urging the admission of the Catholics and Dissenters to offices, and of the Catholics to Parliament (from which Dissenters were not excluded), subject to certain specified tests for

[1] Wilberforce's *Life*, iii. 7. [2] Pellew's *Life of Sidmouth*, i. 285, 286.

the purpose of guarding against any danger to the Established Church, he was only able to describe this policy as 'what appeared to be the prevailing sentiments of the majority of the Cabinet.' He expatiated in the same letter on the nature and force of the test which he proposed, and he added that the measure should be accompanied by one for 'gradually attaching the popish clergy to the Government, and for this purpose making them dependent for a part of their provision (under proper regulations) on the State, and by also subjecting them to superintendence and control.' He added, too, that he desired a political pledge to be exacted 'from the preachers of all Catholic or Dissenting congregations, and from the teachers of schools of every denomination.' Such a policy, Pitt said, afforded 'the best chance of giving full effect to the great object of the Union, that of tranquillising Ireland and attaching it to this country.' 'This opinion' was 'unalterably fixed in his mind, and must ultimately guide his political conduct,' and he intimated that if not permitted to carry it into effect he must sooner or later resign.[1]

The King at once answered, that his coronation oath prevented him from even discussing 'any proposition tending to destroy the groundwork of our happy Constitution, and much more so that now mentioned by Mr. Pitt, which is no less than the complete overthrow of the whole fabric.' He reminded Dundas, that he had expressed similar opinions during the viceroyalty of Lord Westmorland, and during that of Lord Fitzwilliam. He complained bitterly that he had not been treated by his Ministers with proper confidence, and he proceeded to give his own view of the merits and probable effects of the Union, in language which contrasts most curiously with that which during two eventful years his Ministers had been using in Ireland. 'My inclination to an Union with Ireland,' he said, 'was principally founded on a trust that the uniting the Established Churches of the two kingdoms would for ever shut the door to any further measures with respect to the Roman Catholics.' If Pitt would be content never to mention the subject, the King said he would preserve an equal silence.[2]

[1] Stanhope's *Life of Pitt*, iii. Appendix, xviii–xxviii.

[2] See his letter to Pitt (Stanhope's *Life of Pitt*, iii. Appendix, pp. xxviii, xxx), and his letter to Dundas (*Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 333).

It was becoming evident how gravely the Ministers had erred in failing to ascertain and modify the opinions of the King before they raised the question of the Union, and before they involved themselves in negotiations with the Catholics. As, however, the situation stood, it was, as it seems to me, the plain duty of Pitt at all hazards to persevere. It would be scarcely possible to exaggerate the political importance of his decision, for the success of the Union and the future loyalty of the Catholics of Ireland depended mainly upon his conduct; and beside the question of policy, there was a plain question of honour. After the negotiations that had been entered into with the Catholics, after the services that had been asked and obtained from them, and the hopes which had been authoritatively held out to them in order to obtain those services, Pitt could not without grave dishonour suffer them to be in a worse, because a more powerless position, than before the Union, or abandon their claims to a distant future, or support a Ministry which was formed in hostility to them.

There appears to me but little doubt that he could have carried his policy. It was utterly impossible, in the existing state of England, of the Continent, and of Parliament, that any Ministry could have subsisted, to which he was seriously opposed. The impossibility became the more evident, from the fact that the regular Opposition, under Fox and Grey, were openly in favour of Catholic emancipation. If he had persevered he must have triumphed, and the King must ultimately have submitted, as he did on several other occasions when his feelings were deeply affected, and in spite of his most vehement and unqualified protests. He had done so when he suffered Bute to be driven from his Government; when he acknowledged the independence of America; when he dismissed Thurlow; when he permitted Lord Malmesbury to negotiate with France; when he acquiesced in the recall of the Duke of York from the Netherlands; and he afterwards did so when he found it necessary to admit Fox into his councils. Even on his own principles, the question was not one excluding argument or compromise. He declared that it would be a breach of the coronation oath to assent to the abolition of the sacramental test, because it was the great bulwark of the Established Church, which he had sworn to

defend.[1] But it was part of the scheme of Pitt to frame a new political test, including an explicit oath of fidelity to the established Constitution both in Church and State, and to impose it not only on all members of Parliament, and holders of State and corporation offices, but also on all ministers of religion and teachers of schools.[2] A test so wide and so stringent would surely be an adequate substitute for that which it was proposed to abolish, and it is not likely that, when the necessity arose, the conscience of the King would have been found inflexible. But a firm resolution on the part of Pitt to carry his policy was an indispensable condition.

He did indeed repeat his offer of resignation, declaring it to be based on his 'unalterable sense of the line which public duty required of him,'[3] and he afterwards defended his resignation in Parliament, on the ground that he and his colleagues deemed it equally 'inconsistent with their duty and their honour' to continue in office when they were not allowed to propose with the authority of Government, a measure which they deemed the proper sequel of the Union.[4] Dundas, Grenville, Windham, Cornwallis, and Castlereagh took the same course, and they were accompanied by a few men in minor places, among whom Canning was the most conspicuous. But Pitt only accepted the necessity of resigning with extreme reluctance, after much discussion, and probably in a large degree under the pressure of Grenville and Canning, and it was at once seen that, if he at present refused to lead an anti-Catholic ministry, he was at least perfectly prepared not only to support, but in a large measure to construct one.[5] The King applied to the Speaker Addington, as one who shared his opinions on the Catholic question,[6] and Addington at once

[1] In his letter to Pitt, he said he was under 'a religious obligation' 'to maintain the fundamental maxims on which our Constitution is placed, namely, the Church of England being the established one, and that those who hold employments in the State must be members of it, and consequently obliged, not only to take oaths against popery, but to receive the Holy Communion agreeably to the rites of the Church of England.' (Stanhope's *Life of Pitt*, iii. Appendix, p. xxix.) But the King every year assented to a Bill of Indemnity in favour of Protestant Dissenters who took office without the qualification, and no disqualification excluded these Dissenters from Parliament.

[2] See a letter of Lord Grenville in Buckingham's *Courts and Cabinets*, iii. 129.

[3] Stanhope's *Life of Pitt*, iii. Appendix, p. xxx.

[4] Ibid. p. 286.

[5] Compare Buckingham's *Courts and Cabinets*, iii. 131, 134, 143; *Malmesbury's Diaries and Correspondence*, iv. 4.

[6] Pellew's *Life of Sidmouth*, i. 286.

applied to Pitt. On the strenuous recommendation, on the earnest entreaty of Pitt, Addington accepted the task, and Pitt not only promised his full parliamentary support, but also exerted all his influence to induce the great body of his own colleagues to continue at their posts. The resignation even of Canning took place contrary to Pitt's expressed desire. His own brother, Lord Chatham, was one of those who remained in office.[1]

These proceedings were looked on in different quarters in very different ways. Wilberforce pronounced the conduct of Pitt to be 'most magnanimous and patriotic.'[2] Abbot, who succeeded Castlereagh as Irish Secretary, considered it mysterious that Pitt should have resigned at all upon a question on which he was not pledged, and which was not pressing; while many of Pitt's friends pronounced his resignation to be a grievous error, and most damaging to the public weal.[3] The Opposition on their side declared the whole transaction to be a mere juggle. It was perfectly evident, they maintained, that Addington would never have accepted office without a secret understanding with Pitt, and it was equally evident that he could only continue in it by Pitt's support. Pitt, they said, having entangled himself in an embarrassing engagement to the Catholics, was endeavouring to extricate himself by going through the form of resigning power into the hands of a dependant, from whom he could take it when he pleased. He did not mean to act fairly to the Catholics, or to press their cause with all his force, but he intended after a mock battle to come back again, and leave them in the lurch. By exerting himself to form an anti-Catholic Ministry, by assisting the adversaries of concession to adjourn the contest and consolidate their strength, he was preparing for himself a pretext for ultimately abandoning the question, while the inevitable recall which must soon follow his resignation

[1] See *Castlereagh Correspondence*, iv. 35, 39; *Malmesbury Correspondence*, iv. 4; and the detailed account in Pellew's *Life of Sidmouth*. Canning wrote: 'Mr. Pitt has resigned on finding himself not allowed to carry into effect his own wishes and opinions, and the views of the Irish Government respecting the Catholic question. The King has accepted his resignation, and a new Government is forming, in which Mr. Pitt earnestly presses all those of his own friends who are now in office to take part, and to which he intends personally to give the most decided and active support in Parliament.' (*Life of Sidmouth*, i. 299.)

[2] Wilberforce's *Life*, iii. 2.

[3] Pellew's *Life of Sidmouth*, i. 334, 335, 339.

would make him absolute in the Cabinet.[1] It was also a very general belief, that the Catholic question was not the real, not the main, or at least not the only reason for the resignation. It had become necessary to negotiate once more for peace, and any other minister was likely to do so with more chance of success and with less personal humiliation than Pitt. For his own party interest, it was asked, what could be more advantageous than to quit office during these negotiations, and to resume it when they were terminated? It may at once be said, that there is no evidence whatever in the confidential letters of Pitt and of his colleagues, that this last consideration was ever discussed, or stated by them as a reason for the resignation, though it was too obvious to have escaped the notice of Pitt, and may very probably have contributed to dispel his hesitation. That it was not, however, his main motive, is proved decisively by a single fact. He was perfectly ready to resume office before the peace negotiations had been concluded.[2]

We must now return to affairs in Ireland. The strange indifference to the question of the Union, which appears to have prevailed there in the last stages of its discussion, still continued. There were, it is true, in many parts of the country, dangerous bodies of banditti, and there was much systematic anarchy. It was greatly feared that a French invasion would be widely welcomed, and one of the first acts of the Imperial Parliament was to continue both martial law and the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, but it was not believed that the disturbances had any connection with the Union. 'The quiet of the country at large on the subject,' wrote Cornwallis, immediately after the measure had passed, 'and the almost good-humoured indifference with which it is viewed in the metropolis, where every species

[1] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, iv. 60; *Malmesbury Correspondence*, iv. 4.

[2] Sir Cornewall Lewis has examined this episode with great care in his *Administrations of Great Britain*, and he entirely acquits Pitt of being governed in his resignation by any other consideration than the Catholic question (pp. 151–153). The reader, however, should compare on the other side a powerful and interesting letter by Dean Milman in the same work (pp. 268–280). Dundas, according to Lord Malmesbury, said, 'If these new ministers stay in and make peace, it will only smooth matters the more for us afterwards,' and Canning ascribed Pitt's refusal to resume power at once, to a desire to see a peace negotiated by Addington. Lord Malmesbury's own opinion was, 'that Pitt advises Addington to make peace, will assist him in it, and that, peace once made, he will then no longer object to take office.' (*Malmesbury Correspondence*, iv. 39, 47, 50.)

of outrageous opposition was to be expected, consoles us for the painful audiences we are obliged to give patiently to our discontented and insatiable supporters.'[1] After spending nearly a month in the autumn, in travelling through the South of Ireland, he wrote, 'I found no trace of ill humour with respect to the Union, and with the exception only of the county of Limerick, the whole country through which I passed was as perfectly tranquil as any part of Britain.'[2] He at the same time uniformly contended that the Union would do little or no good unless it were speedily followed by a Catholic Relief Bill. He predicted that if his successor threw himself into the hands of the Orange party, 'no advantage would be derived from the Union;' that if Lord Clare and his friends had their way at this critical time, they would ruin British government in Ireland, and drive the country speedily into rebellion.[3] He believed that the confidence which the Catholics placed in his own disposition and intentions towards them, had contributed very largely to the present peace of Ireland and to the passing of the Union, and he declared that he could not, in consideration of his own character or of the public safety, leave them as he found them.[4]

It is remarkable, however, how soon, in spite of the assurances he had been authorised to give to the Catholics, he began to distrust the disposition, or at least the determination of the Cabinet. In October 1800, he wrote to a very intimate friend, 'I cannot help entertaining considerable apprehensions that our Cabinet will not have the firmness to adopt such measures as will render the Union an efficient advantage to the Empire. Those things which if now liberally granted might make the Irish a loyal people, will be of little avail when they are extorted on a future day. I do not, however, despair.' He was much provoked at receiving, both from the King and from the Duke of Portland, letters urging him to make immediate arrangements for the consolidation of the Ordnance establishments in the two countries. It was a measure of centralisation, and a measure for the reduction of patronage, which seemed in itself very

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 270; see, too, pp. 282, 283, 313.
[2] Ibid. p. 291.
[3] Ibid. pp. 237, 250.
[4] Ibid. pp. 238; see, too, p. 316.

advisable, but it was certain to be unpopular, and he strongly urged that, 'instead of standing alone as the first feature of the Union, it might be brought forward some months hence, accompanied by other arrangements of a more pleasing and palatable nature.' Could it have been intended 'to have run the hazard of agitating this island to a degree of madness, to have taken a step which everybody for the last century would have thought likely to produce a civil war—for what? To consolidate the two Ordnance establishments, which might have been done eight or nine years ago with the greatest ease, if the Duke of Richmond had been in the smallest degree accommodating?' 'Lord Castlereagh,' he added, 'will return soon to England, to try to persuade the Ministers to adopt manfully the only measure which can ever make the mass of the people of Ireland good subjects; but I suspect that there is too much apprehension of giving offence in a certain quarter.' 'My only apprehensions,' he wrote in December, 'are from the K—, from the cabal of the late Lord Lieutenant, and from the inferior Cabinet on Irish affairs, consisting of Lords Hobart, Auckland, &c., and the timidity of Ministers.'[1]

The letters of Lord Castlereagh from England in the last days of the year added much to his anxiety. 'Believing,' Cornwallis wrote, 'as I do, that this great work may now be effected, and apprehending that if the opportunity is lost, it can never be regained, you . . . will not wonder at the anxiety that I suffer. Lord Loughborough, I find, is our most active and formidable opponent.' 'Whatever his opinion may be of the

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 294–296, 313. In a remarkable paper drawn up about this time by Lord Castlereagh, in favour of admitting the Catholics to Parliament, the following observations occur: 'Our error perhaps has hitherto been, yielding piecemeal rather than upon system. In leaving an obvious ground of struggle behind, we have always encouraged demand, rather than attained the only end with a view to which the concession had been made. . . . If the same internal struggle continues, Great Britain will derive little beyond an increase of expense from the Union. If she is to govern Ireland upon a garrison principle, perhaps, in abolishing the separate Parliament, she has parted as well with her most effectual means as with her most perfect justification. . . . The Union will do little in itself, unless it be followed up. In addition to the steady application of authority in support of the laws, I look to the measure which is the subject of the above observations [Catholic emancipation], to an arrangement of tithes, and to a provision for the Catholic and Dissenting clergy, calculated in its regulations to bring them under the influence of the State, as essentially necessary to mitigate if it cannot extinguish faction.' (*Castlereagh Correspondence*, iv. 392–400.)

practicability of concession, he will in a short time, or I am much mistaken, find it still more impracticable to resist.' 'With almost all Europe leagued against us, we cannot long exist as a divided nation.'[1]

The dispute in England speedily developed, but at first the letters of Cornwallis and his colleagues in Ireland were sanguine about the issue. 'If Mr. Pitt is firm, he will meet with no difficulty, and the misfortunes of the present times are much in his favour towards carrying this point, on the same grounds that the rebellion assisted the Union.' '*Our* Chancellor will bully and talk big, but he is too unpopular here to venture to quarrel with Administration.'[2] 'Everything depends on the firmness of the Cabinet. There is no Opposition to be appealed to, for they are a hundred times deeper committed upon the point in question than Mr. Pitt. . . . The difficulties of the times carried the Union; they will carry the present question.'[3] All the signs seemed to show that Ireland was acquiescing in the Union, and that prompt Catholic concession would insure its success. 'Notwithstanding the scarcity,' wrote Cornwallis, 'I hear nowhere of any symptoms of ill humour, and the Catholic question will operate so forcibly through the whole country, that I do not think if the French come, they will meet with many friends. Nobody would have believed three years ago that Union, Catholic emancipation, and the restoration of perfect tranquillity could have taken place in so short a time.' 'The calm, however, cannot be expected to last, if the evil genius of Britain should induce the Cabinet to continue the proscription of the Catholics. They are quiet now, because they feel confident of success. What a reverse must we not apprehend from their unexpected disappointment!'[4]

In spite of the attitude of Lord Clare, and the violence of the Orangemen, no serious opposition was apprehended from the Irish Protestants. 'You may be assured,' wrote Cornwallis in December, 'that all the most powerful opposers of the measure in favour of the Catholics, would join in giving their approbation as soon as it is effected.'[5] Cooke, who was probably better ac-

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 316, 317.
[2] Ibid. pp. 331–333.
[3] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, iv. 26, 27.
[4] Ibid. pp. 13, 25.
[5] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 313.

quainted than any other member of the Government with the political forces in Ireland, wrote two months later, 'I am persuaded, from everything that I can collect, that the Protestant mind is made up to acquiesce in concession to the Catholics.' 'I can find no man of common sense and temper who does not think the concession may be safely made. In short, as far as I can learn, the public mind was made up to concession. I except Sir R. Musgrave, Duigenan, Giffard, and a few Orangemen.' He believed that sixty-four out of the hundred Irish members in the Imperial Parliament, would vote in favour of the Catholics, though he feared that if the banner of Protestantism were displayed, as it had been displayed in 1792, 'the Orange spirit' might still 'show itself in an almost universal blaze.'[1] William Elliot was even more sanguine than Cooke about the dispositions in Ireland. Ninety-five out of a hundred Irish members, he believed, would have voted for the Catholics.[2]

Under these circumstances, it may easily be conceived with what alarm, with what absolute consternation, the Irish Government received the news of the ministerial crisis which placed Addington in power. It was not simply that a measure which they believed vitally necessary to the peace of Ireland, and to the success of the Union, was defeated; it was that Pitt, so far from exerting his enormous power to force this measure through Parliament, was actually engaged in assisting Addington in the construction of an anti-Catholic Ministry. Castlereagh was then in England, and by the instruction, and under the direct superintendence of Pitt, he wrote to Cornwallis to soften the blow. The King, he said, was inexorably opposed to Catholic relief, and would not give way. The measure would have no chance of success in the Lords; even if it were carried through both Houses, the King would at all hazards refuse his assent; and even if he were compelled to yield, the measure would be so opposed as to lose all its grace. Under these circumstances, Pitt had determined not to press it, but he desired the Lord Lieutenant to represent to the Catholics that an insurmountable obstacle had arisen to the King's Ministers bringing forward the measure while in office; 'that their attachment to the question was such that they felt it impossible to continue in administration under

[1] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, iv. 45, 46, 51, 60.

[2] *Malmesbury Correspondence*, iv. 40.

the impossibility of proposing it with the necessary concurrence, and that they retired from the King's service, considering this line of conduct as most likely to contribute to the ultimate success of the measure.' Much was added about 'the zealous support' that the Catholics might expect from the outgoing Ministers, and especially from Pitt, but they were warned that any unconstitutional conduct, or any attempt to force the question, would be repressed, and that no specific time could be stated for the attainment of their objects. It was to be the part of the Lord Lieutenant to do all in his power to prevent any demonstration by the Catholics.[1]

Cornwallis undertook to do what he could, but he at the same time declared that nothing would induce him to 'linger for any length of time in office under the administration of men who have come into power for the sole purpose of defeating a measure which he considered to be absolutely necessary for the preservation of the Empire,' and he complained bitterly that, when Catholic emancipation was acquiesced in by all the most important parties and classes in Ireland, and had become generally recognised as indispensably necessary for the safety of the country, a hostile influence arising in England had again defeated it.[2] Castlereagh and Cooke concurred with Cornwallis, both in the course which he adopted, and in the sentiments he expressed. 'If Pitt does not so act as to make it demonstrative that he is really serious on the Catholic question,' wrote Cooke, 'his resignation will be attributed to other causes.' He believed, however, that the eclipse of the question must be very brief. 'To suppose that men who at such a crisis had given up their situations upon a principle of honour, because they could not bring forward the measures they thought necessary for the preservation of the Empire—I say, to suppose that they could again go back as Ministers without those measures being conceded, is absurd. It is supposing them destitute of sense, principle, integrity, honour, and even self-interest. . . . I think all still must come right. . . . The superiority of Mr. Pitt is so strongly felt, that no ministry will like to act without him. You can

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 335, 336.

[2] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, iv. 49, 50; *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 337, 341.

hardly form an idea how the public mind had come round to allow of concession to the Catholics.'[1]

Cornwallis was at this time on very confidential terms with the Catholic leaders, and acting upon his instructions, he succeeded in so far pacifying them, and convincing them of the good intentions of Pitt, that no addresses or demonstrations took place to disturb the Government. He attained this object chiefly by two papers, which he gave to Archbishop Troy and Lord Fingall to be circulated among the leading Catholics in the different parts of Ireland. The first paper was extracted almost verbally from the letter which Castlereagh had written under the supervision of Pitt.[2] It stated that the outgoing Ministers had resigned office because they considered this line of conduct most likely to contribute to the ultimate success of the Catholic cause; it urged the Catholics 'prudently to consider their prospects as arising from the persons who now espouse their interests, and compare them with those which they could look to from any other quarter;' and it continued, 'They may with confidence rely on the zealous support of all those who retire, and of many who remain in office, when it can be given with a prospect of success. They may be assured that Mr. Pitt will do his utmost to establish their cause in the public favour, and prepare the way for their finally attaining their objects; and the Catholics will feel that as Mr. Pitt could not concur in a hopeless attempt to force it now, that he must at all times repress with the same decision, as if he held an adverse opinion, any unconstitutional conduct in the Catholic body.' On these grounds the Catholics were urgently implored

[1] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, iv. 60, 70. Alexander Knox, who was secretary to Castlereagh, fully concurred in the necessity of emancipation, and he wrote at this time the following remarkable words: 'I am well aware how much the distinct Parliament contributed to keep up disaffection; but I am strongly persuaded that if disaffection be still kept up by other sufficient means, the want of a local Parliament may become not an advantage, but a real grievance to the Empire. I take it that one reason among others why an Irish Parliament was first thought of, was because the disturbed state of that country required the presence of prompt and plenary power. . . . When the rebellion actually commenced, the presence of an Irish Parliament was not without its efficacy. If rebellion be kept alive (and alive it will be kept until every degrading circumstance be removed from the Catholics), even the Union, calculated as it is for both local and imperial benefit, may become the source of irreparable mischief both to Ireland and the Empire; because disturbance will, as much as ever, require summary means of suppression, but those means can no longer have the same sanction as was given them by a resident Parliament.' (Ibid. pp. 32, 33.)

[2] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii.

to abstain from doing anything which could give a handle to the opposers of their wishes.

The second paper expressed Cornwallis's own sentiments. It impressed on the Catholics how injurious it would be to their cause, if they took part in any agitation or made any association with men of Jacobinical principles, and thus forfeited the support 'of those who had sacrificed their own situations in their cause.' 'The Catholics,' it continued, 'should be sensible of the benefit they possess by having so many characters of eminence pledged not to embark in the service of Government, except on the terms of the Catholic privileges being obtained.'[1]

No one who has read the correspondence, and understood the character of Cornwallis, will doubt that these words were written with the most perfect honesty, and they made an impression in Ireland which was hardly equalled by the pamphlet which Lord Fitzwilliam had written upon his resignation, or by the letter in which Lord Downshire and his colleagues called on the country to support them against the Union.[2] Yet no words were ever more unfortunate or more deceptive. Cornwallis was obliged to acknowledge that he had never 'received authority, directly or indirectly, from any member of Administration who resigned his office, to give a pledge that he would not embark again in the service of Government, except on the terms of the Catholic privileges being obtained.'[3] What he wrote was merely an inference —the natural inference of a plain and honourable man—drawn from the situation. 'The papers which were circulated among the Catholics,' he afterwards wrote, 'have done much good. It would perhaps have been better not to have inserted the word *pledge*; it was, however, used in a letter which I received from Mr. Dundas at the same time with the communication from Mr. Pitt through Lord Castlereagh, and it could not by any fair construction be supposed to convey any other meaning, than that persons who had gone out of office because the measure could not be brought forward, would not take a part in any administration that was unfriendly to it.'[4] How little right Cornwallis

347, 348; *Castlereagh Correspondence*, iv. 76.

[1] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 348.

[2] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, iv. 71.

[3] *Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 349.

[4] Ibid. p. 350. The letter of Dundas has never been found.

had to use the language he employed, is sufficiently shown by one simple fact. In February, Pitt resigned office because he could not introduce the Catholic relief as a Minister of the Crown. In March he sent a message to the King, promising that whether in or out of office he would absolutely abandon the question during the whole of the reign, and he at the same time clearly intimated that he was ready, if Addington would resign power, to resume the helm, on the condition of not introducing Catholic emancipation, and not suffering it to pass.[1]

In my opinion, it is impossible by any legitimate argument to justify his conduct, and it leaves a deep stain upon his character both as a statesman and as a man. Explanations, however, are not wanting. The King had just had a slight return of his old malady. On February 14, he seems to have caught a severe cold, and at first no other complication appeared, but about the 21st there were clear signs of mental derangement, and they continued with little abatement till March 6. When the illness took place, Addington had made the arrangements for the formation of his Cabinet, but the necessary formalities had not yet been completed, and Pitt in the mean time was conducting the business of the House. The King, on recovering, at once ascribed his illness to the agitation which Pitt had caused him. He appears to have said this to Dr. Willis, and to have repeated it to Lord Chatham, and it naturally came to the ears of Pitt.[2] Pitt, according to his apologists, was so profoundly affected, that he at once, under the impulse of a strong and natural emotion, sent the King an assurance that he would never during his Majesty's reign again move the Catholic question. He made no secret to his immediate friends of the change in his attitude, and many of them then declared that his resignation had no longer an object. The one point of difference was removed; all obligation to the Catholics was discarded; a new state of things had arisen; why then should he not return to power? 'On the grounds of public duty, at a time of public danger,' Pitt reconciled himself to doing so. He refused, indeed, to take the first step, to make any kind of overture, but he gave it clearly to be understood through the Duke of Portland, that he would not be found

[1] Stanhope's *Life of Pitt*, iii. 303–306; *Malmesbury Correspondence*, iv. 31.

[2] *Lord Colchester's Diary*, i. 245; Stanhope's *Life of Pitt*, iii. 302–304; *Malmesbury Correspondence*, iv. 32.

inexorable, if Addington voluntarily resigned, and if the King thought fit to apply to him. On finding, however, that neither the King nor Addington desired the change, he declined to take any further step, and for a time he loyally supported the new Government.[1]

This is the most charitable account of his conduct. It is hardly, I think, the most probable one. It must be remembered, that at the time of the recovery of the King, the crisis had been surmounted; the Ministry of Addington was virtually constituted, and there was therefore absolutely no occasion for any declaration of policy from Pitt. No English statesman had exhibited during his long career a more austere and rigid self-control; no statesman was less swayed by uncalculating emotion, less likely to be betrayed into unguarded speech or hasty action; and though he had served the King for seventeen years, his relations to him had always been cold, distant, and formal. He had resigned office with great reluctance, and, although he had long been disposed to a liberal Catholic policy, he had always shown himself both less earnest and less confident on the question than some of his principal colleagues, and most ready to postpone it at the pressure of difficulty. It was at all times the infirmity of his nature to care more for power than for measures; and when the war broke out, he was very desirous of adjourning difficult internal questions till its close. The moment of his resignation was a very terrible one. Marengo and Hohenlinden had shattered all immediate hopes of restraining the ascendency of Napoleon on the Continent. Turkey, Naples, and Portugal were the only Powers that remained in alliance with England; and Russia, Sweden, Denmark, and Prussia had just revived the armed neutrality, directed against her maritime claims, which had proved so formidable in the days of Catherine II. There were not wanting statesmen who urged that, at such a time, a strong hand should be at the helm; that the resignation had been a great mistake; that Pitt had given, and could therefore break, no positive pledge to the Catholics; that the Catholic question was not one requiring an immediate solution. It was intolerable to him to abandon the power he had wielded so skilfully and so

[1] Compare Pellew's *Life of Sidmouth*, i. 334–337; Stanhope's *Life of Pitt*, iii. 302–313; Lewis's *Administrations of Great Britain*, pp. 210–214.

long, and he was extremely indisposed to enter, in the midst of the war, into a formidable conflict with the King and with the Church, for the sake of a question in which he felt no deep interest. The illness of the King gave him an unlooked-for pretext for extricating himself with some colour of magnanimity from his difficulty, and by deserting the Catholics he removed the greatest obstacle in his path. It is a memorable fact that he took this momentous step without having given Lord Grenville, or, it is said, any other of his colleagues except Dundas, the smallest intimation of his intention.[1]

If Pitt's policy of adjourning great organic changes till the peace, had been consistently carried out, the embarrassment would never have arisen, for the Union would not have been carried. The evil of carrying it, and then failing to carry the measure which was its natural sequel, was irreparable. With different circumstances the Fitzwilliam episode was reproduced. Once more the hopes of the Catholics had been raised almost to the point of certainty, and then dashed to the ground. Once more assurances, which honourable statesmen should have deemed equivalent to a pledge, had been given, and had not been fulfilled. Once more the policy of Clare prevailed.

It does not appear, however, that in this last episode the Irish Chancellor bore any considerable direct part. His stormy career was now drawing to a close, and his relations with the English Government after the Union were very troubled. The assurance which Cornwallis had been instructed to convey to the Catholic leaders, in order to obtain their acquiescence in the Union, had been concealed from him; and when he discovered that Catholic emancipation was intended to be the immediate consequence of the measure which he had done so much to carry, his indignation was unbounded, and he bitterly accused Castlereagh of deception.[2] Cooke, who had hitherto been closely identified with his policy, tried to pacify him by a long and admirable letter. He urged that the concessions already made, rendered the ultimate

[1] See Lewis's *Administrations of Great Britain*, pp. 213, 214.

[2] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, iv. 47, 51. 'Lord Hobart . . . assured me, that both he and Lord Clare had been deceived by Mr. Pitt, and that he would have voted against the Union, had he suspected at the time that it was connected with any project of extending the concessions already made to the Irish Catholics. The present Lord Clare's report of his father's views of the whole matter, tallies with this account of the transaction.' (Lord Holland's *Memoirs of the Whig Party*, i. 162.)

triumph of Catholic emancipation inevitable, and that it was most important that it should not be postponed till after a long and irritating struggle; that the introduction into an Imperial Parliament of a few Catholic gentlemen could not possibly endanger the Constitution, and might permanently attach to it three millions of subjects; that the Established Church was amply guaranteed by the solemn pledge in the Act of Union, and by the adhesion to its doctrines of the great majority of the now United Empire. The Union, he said, was likely to prove 'the greatest possible measure for the British Empire, because it gave that Empire power to satisfy all the fair demands of all its subjects, without the slightest danger to its own security,' and it would be madness in the existing state of Europe to pronounce an eternal interdict against concession, based upon an irrevocable principle, and excluding all possibility of hope.[1]

This letter, however, was far from effecting its object, and Cornwallis, who had for some time completely abandoned his first impression of the right-mindedness and moderation of the Chancellor, now looked upon Clare as one of the most dangerous men in Ireland. The brutal murder of one of his servants in the county of Limerick probably tended to exasperate his feelings; and immediately after the Union, Clare did his utmost in the Imperial House of Lords to defeat every effort of conciliation. In a speech in favour of the continuation of martial law in Ireland, he described Ireland as now wholly in the hands of a wild and fierce democracy, with which civil government was entirely unable to cope, and maintained that nothing but long-continued martial law could give security to the property, laws, and religion of the loyal inhabitants, or prevent them from falling under the dominion of 'unprincipled and merciless barbarians,' 'spurred on by a pure love of blood.' Having given a most extravagantly over-coloured picture of the barbarism of Ireland, he

[1] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, iv. 41–46. This very interesting letter contains another of those false forecasts of the religious future, of which we have had so many: 'I consider that neither the Presbyterian nor Catholic sect are new and rising, but ancient and decaying sects; that their enthusiasm (at least among all the higher and educated orders) is worn out, and that civil equality would produce in them a greater indifference to their respective creeds, and make them safer subjects. I think the democratic madness has greatly spent itself, and that the two sects are attached to the principles and forms of our Constitution, and merely oppose from the circumstance of being excluded.' (P. 45.)

warned the House, that it was an absurd and a calamitous thing to think of repressing this spirit by concession and indulgence. The violence of his denunciations of his countrymen, and the boldness with which he apologised for the use of torture in the rebellion, scandalised his audience, and on one occasion he was called to order for introducing into a discussion a wholly irrelevant attack on Catholic emancipation. Ninety-nine out of a hundred Catholics, he said, were perfectly indifferent to it.[1]

His policy triumphed on the downfall of Pitt, but he never regained his old ascendency. He resented it bitterly, and soon quarrelled with Hardwicke, the new Viceroy, and with Abbot, the Chief Secretary. 'The death of Lord Clare, in the month of January 1802,' wrote Abbot in his journal, 'delivered the Irish and also the British Government from great trouble. He had rendered signal service to his country in a crisis of great violence, but his love of power and the restlessness of his temper made him unfit for the station of Chancellor, when no longer coupled with the overruling authority which he had exercised as Minister before the Union.'[2] His funeral, as is well known, was the occasion of disgraceful rioting, and of insults much like those which afterwards followed the hearse of Lord Castlereagh in England, but the significance of the demonstration has been exaggerated, for it appears to have been the carefully organised outrage of a few men.[3]

Lord Hardwicke urged the Government to appoint an Irishman to the vacant post, and recommended Lord Kilwarden, as combining in a rare degree the requisite gifts, both of intellect and character; but the Government followed the advice of Lord Eldon, and Sir John Mitford, who had been Speaker of the House of Commons since the resignation of Addington and who was now made Lord Redesdale, became Irish Chancellor.

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxxv. 1231–1237; O'Flanagan's *Lives of the Irish Chancellors*, ii. 273, 274; *Castlereagh Correspondence*, iv. 61.

[2] *Lord Colchester's Diary*, i. 278, 279, 321. In a paper drawn up by the Irish Government for Addington in Jan. 1802, Clare is said to be 'hostile to any government by Lord Lieutenant. Desirous himself to be Lord Deputy, or at the head of Lords Justices, and for Mr. Cooke to be Secretary of State under him.' (Ibid. p. 287.)

[3] 'The riot and disorder at Lord Clare's funeral was occasioned by a gang of about fourteen persons under orders of a leader, so that it does not tell so ill for the character of the Dublin populace (whom I am not, however, going to defend), as I had at first imagined.' (Lord Hardwicke to Abbot, Feb. 2, 1802. *Colchester MSS.*)

He was an excellent lawyer, and a very amiable and upright man, but his first and last idea on the great question of Irish policy was, that the main object of English government should be to Protestantise Ireland. 'The Catholics of Ireland,' he wrote, 'must have no more political power. They have already so much as to be formidable.' 'Nothing, in my opinion, can be more despicable than the conduct of the Roman Catholics, with a few exceptions, and nothing more abominable than the conduct of their priests. The canting hypocrisy of Dr. Troy . . . is, to me, disgusting. . . . I am decidedly of opinion that you cannot safely grant anything; that you must raise the Protestant, not the Roman Catholic Church. To make them [the priests] your friends, is impossible. The college of Maynooth vomits out priests ten times worse than ever came from the Spanish colleges. I would withhold all supply to that establishment, and were I Minister, would abolish it.' 'The general profligacy of this country, derived partly from the corruption of their Parliament, and partly from the corruptions of the Catholic Church, which is less reformed here than in any Catholic country in Europe, is astonishing to an Englishman.' Ireland, he thought, should be governed for some years as despotically as France, but in a more honest spirit, and with a real desire to put down the inveterate jobbing of the country, and this could never be achieved unless all the chief posts of influence and power were filled by Englishmen. The legislative Union was still but a 'rope of sand,' and much more was needed to consolidate it. Looking back to all the tangled and inconsistent negotiations which had taken place during the last few years, and especially during the Union struggle, he owned himself utterly unable to explain the conduct of the English Ministers, 'without supposing that men of great talents, of great experience, of great political knowledge, acted without reflection, or without integrity, or from mere caprice, or that they were deceiving, and endeavouring to overreach each other, some meaning one thing, some the direct contrary.'[1]

The opinions of Lord Redesdale were well known; he himself brought them into full relief, in a very injudicious corre-

[1] See his very curious letters in *Lord Colchester's Diary*, i. 407–410, 436, 466, 467, 476, 510, 511.

spondence with Lord Fingall, and he remained Chancellor during the short Ministry of Pitt that followed. The Lord Lieutenant governed in the same spirit, though with more discretion of language. 'Lord Hardwicke's,' it was boasted, 'is the only Administration that has never given the heads of the Catholic clergy an invitation to the Castle; he in no way recognises them further than the law admits them to be priests.'[1] This was the end of all the confidential intercourse that had taken place between the Government and the bishops before the Union; of all the hopes that had been held out; of all the services the bishops had rendered in carrying the Union. Pitt, at last tired of opposition, joined with the different sections hostile to the Ministry, and drove Addington from power in the spring of 1804, though he was obliged soon after to admit him to his own Ministry; but the Catholics gained nothing by the change, and the question which, in 1800, seemed almost won, was adjourned to a distant future.

These things did not produce in Ireland any immediate convulsion, and in the strange and paradoxical history of Irish public opinion, the Addington Ministry can hardly be counted even unpopular. Lord Redesdale, indeed, said that the country for some time could only be held as a garrisoned country; that the Jacobin spirit, though seldom openly displayed, was still prevalent, and that it was most manifestly increasing in the Catholic population.[2] Lord Hardwicke, in a paper drawn up at the close of the summer of 1801, expressed his fear lest 'the aversion to the Union which obtained very strongly in many parts of Ireland, and still continues unabated,' might 'be unhappily confirmed, to the incalculable injury of the Empire;'[3] but when, in the June of 1802, a general election at last took place, no such aversion was displayed. The saying of Lord Clare, that the Irish are 'a people easily roused and easily appeased,' was never more clearly verified. Though this was the first occasion since the Union, in which the constituencies had the opportunity of expressing their opinion of the conduct of their representatives on that great question, the Union appears to have borne no part whatever in the election, and it

[1] See a letter of Lady Hardwicke. (*Lord Colchester's Diary*, i. 441.)

[2] Ibid. pp. 407, 408.

[3] Ibid. p. 313.

is stated that not a single member who had voted for it was for that reason displaced.[1] In Ireland, even more than in most countries, good administration is more important than good politics, and the mild, tolerant, and honest administration of Lord Hardwicke, gave him considerable popularity. Under Cornwallis orders had been given for rebuilding and repairing, at Government expense, the Catholic chapels which had been burnt or wrecked after the rebellion, and this measure was steadily carried on,[2] while persistent and successful efforts were made, especially by the Chancellor, to put an end to jobbing and corruption.

The short rebellion of Emmet, in 1803, was merely the last wave of the United Irish movement, and it was wholly unconnected with the Union and with the recent disappointment of the Catholics. It was suppressed without difficulty and without any acts of military outrage, and it at least furnished the Government with a gratifying proof that the Union had not broken the spring of loyalty in Dublin, for the number of yeomen who enlisted there, was even greater than in 1798.[3] Grattan had refused to enter the Imperial Parliament at the election of 1802, but he watched the signs of the time with an experienced eye, and the judgment which this great champion of the Catholic claims formed of Lord Hardwicke's Administration, is very remarkable. He wrote to Fox that, without a radical change of system, it would be impossible to plant in Ireland permanent, unfeigned loyalty; that the Union had not been carried, for although a loyal Parliament had been destroyed, 'equality of conditions, civil or religious, had not even commenced;' but he

[1] 'The general election was scarcely sufficient to ruffle the calm into which, after the Union, the commotions of Ireland had subsided. . . . Not a single member of the Irish Parliament who supported the Union, was displaced in consequence of the displeasure of his constituents; in no instance was this support upbraided to any candidate; some of the most extensive and independent counties returned gentlemen who had shown great zeal in accomplishing this momentous arrangement, and only in one instance (the county of Dublin), did any candidate deem his opposition to the Union a sufficient claim for popular favour, to allude to it in addressing the constituent body.' (*Annual Register*, 1802, p. 194.) According to this authority, twenty-five new Irish members were elected. (P. 436.)

[2] Dr. Troy to Marsden, Sept. 27, 1800, I.S.P.O.; *Colchester's Diary*, i. 291; *Ireland, Historical and Statistical*, by G. L. Smyth, iii. 403.

[3] This is stated by Grattan in a letter to Fox (Grattan's *Life*, v. 242), and it is corroborated by Alexander Knox. (*Remains*, iv. 135.)

added, 'without any alteration in the legal condition of this country, and merely by a temperate exercise of the existing laws, the present chief governor of Ireland has more advanced the strength of Government and its credit, than could have been well conceived,' and 'from the manner in which this last rebellion was put down, I incline to think that if Lord Hardwicke had been Viceroy, and Lord Redesdale Chancellor, in '98, the former rebellion would have never existed.'[1]

But from this time the Catholic question passed completely beyond the control of the Government. In Ireland the utter failure of the gentry and the bishops to procure emancipation by negotiations with the Government, speedily threw the energetic elements of the Catholic body and the lower priesthood into a course of agitation which altered the whole complexion of the question, and enormously increased its difficulty and its danger.[2] In 1799 the Catholic bishops had, as we have seen, fully accepted the proposal of giving a veto on episcopal appointments to the Government, and not only Pitt, but also Grattan, had strongly maintained that emancipation could only be safely carried, if it were accompanied by such restrictions on ecclesiastical appointments and on intercourse with the Holy See, as existed in all Protestant and in all Catholic countries throughout Europe.[3] In opposition to Grattan, to the Catholic gentry, to the English Catholics, and even to a rescript from Rome, O'Connell induced the great body of the Irish Catholics, both lay and clerical, to repudiate all such restrictions, and to commit themselves to an agitation for unqualified emancipation. The panic and division created by this agitation in Ireland, and the strong spirit of ecclesiastical Toryism that overspread England after the death of Pitt, combined to throw back the question. In 1800 the

[1] Grattan's *Life*, v. 242, 243.

[2] Magan, as early as Feb. 8, 1801, describes the beginning of this movement. 'Every art is now used to influence the Catholic mind. It is said, nothing is to be done for them. It is said to the inferior clergy, they have been deceived by their bishops, particularly since a late party of that description dined with his Excellency, which has received the utmost publicity. It has reached the most remote village in the country. Be assured, if any arrangement is ever likely to take place, it would be prudent to let it be known through some channel or other.' (I.S.P.O.) On the dinner referred to, see *Castlereagh Correspondence*, iv. 24.

[3] See Grattan's remarkable speech on the Catholic question in 1810, and also Fagan's *Life of O'Connell*, i. 71. Many particulars on this subject will be found in Sir J. Hippisley's *Tracts*.

conscientious objections of the King seemed to form the only serious obstacle to Catholic emancipation. The establishment of the Regency in 1812 removed that obstacle, but the Catholic hopes appeared as far as ever from their attainment. The later phases of this melancholy history do not fall within my present task. It is sufficient to say, that when Catholic emancipation was at last granted in 1829, it was granted in the manner which, beyond all others, was likely to produce most evil, and to do least good. It was the result of an agitation which, having fatally impaired the influence of property, loyalty, and respectability in Catholic Ireland, had brought the country to the verge of civil war, and it was carried avowedly through fear of that catastrophe, and by a Ministry which was, on principle, strongly opposed to it.

Pitt, as we have seen, intended that the Union should be followed by three great measures—the admission of Catholics into Parliament, the endowment of their priesthood under conditions that gave a guarantee for their loyalty, and the commutation of tithes. Each measure, if wisely and promptly carried, would have had a great pacifying influence, and the beneficial effect of each measure would have been greatly enhanced by combination with the others.

The first measure had been abandoned, but, of the three, it was probably, in reality, the least important, and there was no insuperable reason why the other two should not have been pressed. The King, it is true, had very lately declared himself opposed to the payment of the priests, but he had not placed his opposition on the same high and conscientious grounds as his opposition to emancipation,[1] and Lord Grenville, who was far more earnest on the Catholic question than Pitt, strongly maintained that the payment of the priests was a measure which might be, and ought to be, carried.[2] The Government had offered endowment on certain conditions to the bishops in 1799,

[1] See his letter to Pitt, Jan. 24, 1799. (Stanhope's *Life of Pitt*, iii. Appendix, p. xviii.) Lord Monteagle, in a speech in the House of Lords in 1848, said (I know not on what authority), that George III., 'opposed as he was to the concession of the Catholic claims, was favourable to the endowment of the Catholic clergy.' (*Parl. Debates*, 3rd series, p. 1131.) It does not appear that the King had objected either to the endowment of Maynooth, or to the payment of the Scotch priests.

[2] *Castlereagh Correspondence*, iv. 89.

and the offer and the conditions had been accepted, and a report of the position of the different orders of priesthood in Ireland had been drawn up, which clearly showed how sorely it was needed.[1] The supreme importance, both moral and political, of raising the status and respectability of this class of men, of attaching them to the Government, and of making them, in some degree, independent of their flocks, was sufficiently obvious, and has been abundantly recognised by a long series of the most eminent statesmen. In an intensely Catholic nation, where there is scarcely any middle class, and where the gentry are thinly scattered, and chiefly Protestant, the position of the priesthood was certain to be peculiarly important, and the dangers to be feared from a bad priesthood were peculiarly great. Individuals often act contrary to their interests, but large classes of men can seldom or never be counted on to do so; and in Ireland, neither interest nor sentiment was likely to attach the Catholic clergy to the side of the law. Drawn from a superstitious and disloyal peasantry, imbued with their prejudices, educated on a separate system, which excluded them from all contact, both with the higher education of their own country and with the conservative spirit of continental Catholicism, they have usually found themselves wholly dependent for all temporal advantages—for popularity, for influence, and for income—upon the favour of ignorant, lawless, and often seditious congregations. Such a clergy, if they remained wholly unconnected with the Government of the country, were not likely to prove an influence for good, and if, as is undoubtedly true, the Catholic Church has, in some most important respects, conspicuously failed as a moral educator of the Irish people, this failure is to be largely ascribed to the position of its priesthood.

The moment was peculiarly favourable for reforming this great evil. The bishops, though they could hardly press the claims of the clergy, after the great disappointment of the laity, were still ready to accept endowment with gratitude;[2] the

[1] According to this report, the average income of Irish parish priests was then about 65*l.* a year, exclusive of the expense of keeping a curate. The curates in most places lived with the parish priests, who gave them their diet and lodging, support for one horse, and an allowance of 10*l.* in money. (*Castlereagh Correspondence*, iv. 99.)

[2] Ibid. iv. 227–229. There is

clergy had not yet been transformed by agitation into political leaders, and the poor would have welcomed with delight any measure which freed them from some most burdensome dues. Addington appears to have been fully convinced of the policy of the measure, but Pitt, having once moved the Catholic question out of his way, would take no steps in its favour, and without his powerful assistance, it would have been hopeless to attempt to carry it. The golden opportunity was lost, and the whole later history of Ireland bears witness to the calamity.

Lord Cornwallis, at this time, wrote the following characteristic and pathetic lines to Marsden, who had aided him so powerfully in carrying the Union. 'Before I left London, I spoke several times to Mr. Addington, on the subject of a provision for the Catholic clergy, and told him that, from an interview which I had with Dr. Moylan, I found that they were *now* willing to accept of it. He seemed to be fully impressed with the necessity of the measure, especially as the Regium Donum to the Presbyterian ministers was to be increased, and assured me that he would take an early opportunity of representing it to his Majesty. I have no doubt of Mr. A.'s sincerity, but I am afraid that the *August Personage* whom I have mentioned, is too much elated by having obtained his own emancipation, to be in a humour to attend much to any unpleasant suggestions from his purest confidential servants. If this point, at least, is not carried, no hope can be entertained of any permanent tranquillity in Ireland, and we, who so strenuously endeavoured to render that island the great support and bulwark of the British Empire, shall have the mortification to feel that we laboured in vain.'[1]

The proposed commutation of tithes was abandoned in the

a similar letter of Castlereagh to Marsden (July 5, 1802) in the I.S.P.O.

[1] Cornwallis to Marsden, July 19, 1802. (I.S.P.O.) It appears from Lord Colchester's diary that the Irish Government, or at least the Chief Secretary, Abbot, opposed the plan. One of the reasons given has a melancholy significance. 'It would form a lasting and irrevocable bar to the long-established policy of gradually Protestantising the country, and wearing out the attachment to the Catholic religion.' (P. 356.) The question, however, was for some time under deliberation. In September, Cornwallis wrote: 'The Government here will, no doubt, have firmness enough to insist, in a *certain quarter*, on a provision for the Catholic clergy. Addington seemed determined to go through with the measure when I last saw him, and I hope he will not

same manner, and for the same reasons. Year after year the English Government had been told, not only by Grattan, but also by the chief members of the Irish Administration, that the existing tithe system was the most fertile of all the sources of Irish anarchy and crime, and that a wise and just system of commutation was a matter of supreme importance. Lord Loughborough, who chiefly defeated Catholic emancipation, had himself drawn up a Tithe Commutation Bill. Lord Redesdale, who represented the most exaggerated form of anti-Catholic Toryism, had declared that such a measure was absolutely necessary, and that without it, the country would never be sufficiently quiet for the general residence of a Protestant clergy.[1] But nothing was done, and Ireland was left for a whole generation seething in all the anarchy arising from this most prolific source. The agitation at last culminated in a great organised conspiracy against the payment of tithes, accompanied and supported, like all such conspiracies in Ireland, by a long and ghastly train of murder and outrage. The fatal precedent was set, of a successful and violent revolt against contracts and debts. The Protestant clergy, who were for the most part perfectly innocent in the matter, and who formed perhaps the most healthy, and certainly the most blameless section of Irish life, were over large districts reduced to the deepest poverty, and a vast step was taken towards the permanent demoralisation of Ireland. At last, after some abortive measures, the two great English parties concurred in the outlines of a scheme of commutation, and in 1835 the Government of Sir Robert Peel introduced his Tithe Bill, commuting tithes into a rent charge to be paid by the landlords with a deduction of 25 per cent. The general principle had already been adopted by the Whig Opposition in the preceding year, but they perceived that, by bringing forward an amendment uniting Peel's Bill with the wholly different question of the appropriation of the surplus revenues of the Irish Church to secular purposes, they could defeat the Government, and them-

flinch.' (Cornwallis to Marsden, Sept. 2, 1802, I.S.P.O.) A little later he wrote: 'It would have been better if a provision for the Catholic clergy could have been obtained when we were threatened with no immediate danger, but if we are again forced to enter the lists against the great power of France, without any ally to assist us, I trust we shall see the necessity of making ourselves as strong as possible at home.' (Ibid. Nov. 16, 1802.)

[1] *Colchester's Diary*, i. 410.

selves climb into power. With the support, and in a large degree under the influence of O'Connell, they took this course; but they soon found that, though the House of Lords was ready to carry the tithe composition, it was inexorably hostile to the appropriation clause, and, at last, having cursed Ireland with three more years of tithe agitation, the Whig Ministry carried in 1838 the very Bill which Sir Robert Peel had been driven out of office for proposing.

It was a tardy measure, discreditably carried, but it proved of inestimable benefit to Ireland, and it is one of the very few instances of perfectly successful legislation on Irish affairs. It could not, however, efface the evil traces of the preceding thirty-eight years of anarchy and outrage, and it is impossible not to reflect with bitterness, how different might have been the course of Irish history if even this one boon had accompanied or immediately followed the Union.

The reader who considers all this, may justly conclude that the continued disaffection of Ireland was much less due to the Union, or to the means by which the Union was carried, than to the shipwreck of the great measures of conciliation which ought to have accompanied it, and which were intended to be its immediate consequence. The policy which Pitt proposed to himself was a noble and a comprehensive, though a sufficiently obvious one; but when the time came to carry it into execution, he appears to me to have shown himself lamentably deficient both in the sagacity and in the determination of a great statesman. Nor is it, I think, possible to acquit him of grave moral blame. However culpable was the manner in which he forced through the Union, there can at least be no reasonable doubt that his motives were then purely patriotic; that he sought only what he believed to be the vital interest of the Empire, and not any personal or party object. There was here no question of winning votes, or turning a minority into a majority, or consolidating a party, or maintaining an individual ascendency. It is difficult to believe that the alloy of personal ambition was equally absent, when he cast aside so lightly the three great Catholic measures on which the peace of Ireland and the success of the Union mainly depended. It is indeed probable that he disguised from himself the presence of such motives, and that

they were in truth largely blended with public considerations. The difficulties of his position were very great—the strain of a gigantic and disastrous war; an obstinate and half-mad King; a hostile Church; a divided Cabinet. He may easily have persuaded himself, that it was a great public interest that he should continue at the helm while the storm was at its height, and that he would be able in a near future to accomplish his designs. His genius was far more incontestable in peace than in war, and according to all the precedents of the eighteenth century, a war which had lasted seven years could not be far from its end. When the Union was carried, Pitt was only forty-one—twenty-one years younger than the Sovereign whose resistance was the greatest obstacle in his path. His constitution, it is true, was much broken, but it is probable that he still looked forward to another long pacific Ministry, and if he had obtained it, it is scarcely possible that he would have left the great group of Irish questions unsolved.

But if this was his hope, it was doomed to bitter disappointment. The war had still fourteen years to run, and his own life was drawing fast to its early close. He regained office in 1804, but he never regained power, and his last miserably feeble, struggling and divided Ministry was wholly unfit to undertake the settlement of these great questions. In a speech in March 1805, he spoke in language which was not without its pathos, of his abiding conviction that in an United Parliament concessions, under proper guards and securities, might be granted to the Catholics which would bring with them no danger and immense benefit to the Empire; he said that if his wish could carry them, he saw no rational objection; and Canning afterwards declared from his own knowledge, that Pitt's opinions on that subject were to the very last unchanged.[1] But both in England and Ireland the auspicious moment had passed, and moral and political influences were rising, which immensely added to the difficulties of a wise and peaceful solution.

[1] See Canning's speech, March 6, 1827, *Parl. Deb.* 2nd series, xvi. 1006. Lord Fingall had an interview with Pitt about the Catholic petition in 1805. Pitt, he says, 'though extremely polite, gave us not the most distant hope.' He could fix no time, 'though he candidly expressed his own opinion as to the good policy of the measure.' (Lord Fingall to Marsden, March 19, 1805, I.S.P.O.)

It would have been far wiser to have deferred the Union question till the war had terminated, and till the English Ministers had arrived at a well-grounded certainty that it was in their power to carry the measures that could alone have made it acceptable to the majority of the nation. Another evil which resulted from carrying the Union in time of war, was that its financial arrangements completely broke down. I do not propose to enter into the extremely complicated and difficult questions, that have been raised, relating to those arrangements between the two countries in the years that followed the Union.[1] They belong to the historian of a later period of Irish history, and they deserve his most careful attention. Pitt and Castlereagh, as we have seen, had fixed two-seventeenths as the proportion of Ireland's contribution to the general expenditure of the Empire; and if the peace of Amiens had been a permanent one, it is possible that this proportion might not have been excessive. But the best Irish financiers had almost with one voice predicted that it would prove so; and with the vast expenditure that accompanied the last stages of the long French war, their prediction was speedily verified. It was at once seen that Ireland was totally incapable of meeting her obligation, and the prospect which Castlereagh had held out of diminished expenditure, soon vanished like a mirage. It is a somewhat remarkable fact, that it has been pronounced by the best authorities impossible to state with complete accuracy the net liabilities of the two countries, either at the time of the Union, or at the time of amalgamation of the Exchequers in 1817.[2] According to the figures, however, which were laid before Parliament in 1815, the separate funded debt of Ireland in 1801 was 26,841,219*l.*, while that of Great Britain was 420,305,944*l.* But every year after the Union, and in spite of an immense increase of the revenue raised in Ireland by taxation,[3] the Irish debt increased with a rapidity vastly greater than in the period before the Union, vastly greater in proportion than that of Great Britain.

[1] The most important facts relating to them will be found in the Parliamentary Reports, *On the Taxation of Ireland*, in 1864 and 1865.

[2] *Report on the Taxation of Ireland*, 1865, p. vii.

[3] Some remarkable facts on this subject were collected by Mr. Chisholm, the Chief Clerk of the Exchequer, in a paper on the relative ability of Great Britain and Ireland to contribute to the taxation of the United Kingdom, Report of 1865, Appendix 9. See also the Report of

In 1817 the separate funded debt of Ireland had increased to 86,838,938*l.*, while that of England had only risen to 682,531,933*l.*, and the proportion between the two, which at the Union was about 1 to 15·5, had become in 1816 about 1 to 7·8. The unfunded debt of Ireland in the same period rose from 1,699,938*l.* to 5,304,615*l.* and that of Great Britain from 26,080,100*l.* to 44,650,300*l.*[1] The Act of Union had provided that if the debts of the two countries ever bore to each other the same ratio as their contributions, they might be amalgamated; and in 1817, this time had more than come, the prediction of the anti-Unionists was verified, and the debts of the two countries were consolidated.

It must, however, be added, that this consolidation did not for a long period lead to an equality of taxation. The poverty of Ireland made this impossible. Irish taxation in the years that followed the Union was chiefly indirect, and the small produce of the duties that were imposed, clearly showed the real poverty of the country.[2] Long after the consolidation of the Exchequers, Great Britain bore the burden of many important

the Commissioners. It appears from these documents, that 'the permanent taxation of Great Britain increased from 1801 to 1811 in the proportion of 18⅓ to 10, and the whole revenue, including war taxes, as 21¼ to 10; while the revenue of Ireland had, in the same time, increased in the proportion of 23 to 10' (p. vi); that 'the net revenue of Ireland derived from taxation, upon an average of the last five years, ending in 1816, was more than doubled as compared with the net revenue in 1800;' and that in 1815, the net revenue raised in Ireland by taxation exceeded that of 1800 by no less than 128 per cent. (Pp. 140, 141.) See, too, the Report of 1864, p. 272.

[1] *Report of the Taxation of Ireland*, 1864, pp. xx, xxi. The calculations of Mr. Finlaison give different figures. His summary is that 'the value of the whole debt of Great Britain (funded and unfunded) at the time of the Union was 329,868,585*l.*, and the value of the whole debt of Ireland, 23,198,810*l.*, and the proportion as 28·4 to 2; and that the value of the whole debt of Great Britain at the time of the amalgamation of the Exchequers was 546,299,034*l.*, the value of the whole debt of Ireland 86,992,931*l.* and the proportion as 12·5 to 2. (*Report of the Committee on Irish Taxation*, 1865, p. viii.)

[2] In a speech on May 2, 1853, during the debate about the income tax, Lord J. Russell stated, on the authority of Lord Sydenham, 'that in the year 1807 the revenue of Ireland amounted to 4,378,000*l.* Between that year and the conclusion of the war, taxes were successively imposed which, according to the calculations of Chancellors of the Exchequer, were to produce 3,400,000*l.* or to augment the revenue to the extent of 7,700,000*l.* What was the result? In the year 1821, when that amount, less than 400,000*l.* for taxes afterwards repealed, ought to have been paid into the Exchequer, the whole revenue of Ireland amounted only to 3,844,000*l.*, being 534,000*l.* less than in 1807. This was not the effect of the income tax, or of a direct tax. It was the effect of the taxes upon the great articles of consumption.' (*Parl. Deb.* 3rd series, cxxvi. 1000, 1001.)

taxes which were not extended to Ireland, and even now Ireland enjoys some exemptions. It was not until 1842 that Sir R. Peel made some serious efforts to equalise the taxation. He abstained, indeed, from imposing on Ireland the income tax, which he then imposed on Great Britain, but he added one shilling in the gallon to the duty on Irish spirits, and he equalised the stamp duties in the two countries. The policy was not altogether successful. The additional duty on spirits was repealed in 1843; the additional revenue derived from the stamps was lost in the reduction of the stamp duties both in Great Britain and Ireland. But the project of equalising taxation was soon carried out with far greater severity and success by Mr. Gladstone, who in 1853 extended the income tax to Ireland, which was then just rising out of the deep depression of the famine; and another great step was taken in 1858, by the assimilation of the duties on English and Irish spirits. By these successive measures the equalisation of taxation was nearly effected. In ten years the taxation of Ireland was increased 52 per cent., while that of Great Britain was only increased 17 per cent., and the proportion of the Irish to the British revenue, which in the first sixteen years of the century was between one-thirteenth and one-fourteenth, rose in the ten years after 1852 to one-tenth or one-ninth.[1]

It is no part of my task to discuss the wisdom or propriety of these measures, or to examine what would have been the financial condition of Ireland, if she had retained her separate Parliament, or if the clause in the Act of Union relating to the contribution had been drawn as Beresford desired.[2] But the contrast between the hopes held out in the speech of Castlereagh and the actual course of events cannot be denied, and it exercised an unfortunate influence on the history of the Union. Nor was it possible for an Empire which was crippled by the strain of a gigantic war, and during many subsequent years almost crushed by the burden of its colossal debt, to assist Irish development, as it might have done in happier times. In our own day, the Imperial Parliament has conferred an inestimable benefit on Ireland, by largely placing at her service the unrivalled credit of the Empire; by lending immense sums for purposes of public utility at a much lower rate of interest than any purely Irish

[1] *Report of* 1865, p. viii, Appendix No. 9.

[2] See p. 476.

fund could possibly have borne; but it was only after an Act which was passed in the fifth year of Queen Victoria, that this policy was to any considerable extent adopted.[1]

These considerations are sufficient to show, under what unfavourable and unhappy circumstances the great experiment of the Irish Union has been tried. They are, however, far from representing the whole chain of causes which have retarded the pacification of Ireland. Very few countries in an equal space of time have been torn by so much political agitation, agrarian crime, and seditious conspiracy; have experienced so many great economical and social revolutions, or have been made the subject of so many violent and often contradictory experiments in legislation. The tremendous fall of prices after the peace of 1815, which was especially felt in a purely agricultural country; the destruction by the factory system of the handloom industry, which once existed in nearly every farmhouse in Ulster; an increase of population in the forty-seven years that followed the Union, from little more than four and a half to little less than eight and a half millions, without any corresponding progress in manufacturing industry or in industrial habits; a famine which exceeded in its horrors any other that Europe has witnessed during the nineteenth century; the transformation, in a period of extreme poverty and distress, of the whole agricultural industry of Ireland, through the repeal of the corn laws; the ruin of an immense portion of the old owners of the soil; the introduction under the Encumbered Estates Act of a new class of owners, often wholly regardless of the traditions and customs of Irish estates; a period of land legislation which was intended to facilitate and accelerate this change, by placing all agrarian relations on the strictest commercial basis, and guaranteeing to the purchaser by parliamentary title the most absolute ownership of his estate; another period of legislation which broke the most formal written contracts, deprived the owner not only of all controlling influence, but even of a large portion of what he

[1] See the evidence of Mr. Barnes, the Solicitor to the Public Works Loan Commission, in the *Report on Irish Taxation* (1865), p. 17. Mr. Barnes said: 'The loans to Ireland previous to the Act of 5 Vict. were very few. The principal loan to Ireland before that, was a special loan to the Ulster Canal of 120,000*l.* under an Act of Parliament passed for that particular purpose. There were other small loans made to Ireland, but not to any extent before the Act I have mentioned.'

had bought, and established a dual and a confused ownership which could not possibly endure; an emigration so vast and so continuous, that, in less than half a century, the population of Ireland sank again almost to the Union level; all these things have contributed in their different times and ways to the instability, the disorganisation, and the misery that swell the ranks of sedition and agitation.

Other influences have powerfully concurred. The British Constitution has passed under the democratic movement of the century, and it has been assumed that a country in which a majority of the population are disaffected, and which is totally unlike England in the most essential social and political conditions, can be safely governed on the same plane of democracy as England, and its representation in the Imperial Parliament has been even left largely in excess of that to which, by any of the tests that regulate English and Scotch representation, it is entitled. The end of every rational system of representation is to reflect, in their due proportion and subordination, the different forms of opinion and energy existing in the community, giving an especial weight and strength to those which can contribute most to the wise guidance and the real well-being of the State. In the representation of the British Empire, the part which is incontestably the most diseased has the greatest proportionate strength, while the soundest elements in Irish life are those which are least represented. About a third part of the Irish people are fervently attached to the Union, and they comprise the great bulk of the property and higher education of the country; the large majority of those who take any leading part in social, industrial, or philanthropic enterprise; the most peaceful, law-abiding, and industrious classes in the community; nearly every man who is sincerely attached to the British Empire. In three provinces, such men are so completely outvoted by great masses of agricultural peasants, that they are virtually disfranchised; while in the whole island, this minority of about a third commands only a sixth part of the representation. A state of representation so manifestly calculated to give an abnormal strength to the most unhealthy and dangerous elements in the kingdom, is scarcely less absurd, and it is certainly more pernicious, than that which Grattan and Flood de-

nounced. To place the conduct of affairs in the hands of loyal, trustworthy, and competent men, is not the sole, but it is by far the most important end of politics. No greater calamity can befall a nation, than to be mainly represented and directed by conspirators, adventurers, or professional agitators, and no more severe condemnation can be passed upon a political system than that it leads naturally to such a result. We have seen how clearly Grattan foresaw that this might one day be the fate of Ireland.

It was under these conditions or circumstances, that the great political movement arose which forms the central fact of the modern history of Ireland. The Fenian conspiracy, which sprang up in America, but which had also roots in every large Irish town, was not directed to a mere repeal of the Union; it aimed openly and avowedly at separation and a republic, and it differed chiefly from the Young Ireland movement in the far less scrupulous characters of its leaders, and in its intimate connection with atrocious forms of outrage, directed against the lives and properties of unoffending Englishmen. Growing up chiefly in the comparatively prosperous population beyond the Atlantic, being skilfully organised, and appealing for contributions to a wide area of often very honest credulity, it obtained command of large financial resources; but its leaders soon found that unassisted Fenianism could find no serious response among the great mass of the Irish people. Like the Young Ireland movement, its supporters were almost exclusively in the towns. In the country districts it was received with almost complete apathy. The outbreaks it attempted proved even more insignificant than that of 1848, and altogether contemptible when compared with the great insurrection of the eighteenth century. In spite of the impulse given to the conspiracy, when the author of the Act for disestablishing the Irish Church publicly ascribed the success of that measure mainly to a murderous Fenian outrage, it is not probable that Fenianism would have had much permanent importance, if it had not taken a new character, and allied itself with a great agrarian movement.

We have had in these volumes abundant evidence of the vast place which agrarian crime and conspiracy have played in Irish history, but it was only very gradually that they became connected with politics. The Whiteboy explosions of the

eighteenth century appear to have had no political character, but some connection was established when the United Irish movement coalesced with Defenderism, and it was powerfully strengthened in the tithe war of the present century. Later agrarian crime had an organisation and a purpose which made it peculiarly easy to give it a political hue, and we have seen how many influences had conspired to isolate the landowning class, to deprive them of different forms of power, and to cut the ties of traditional influence and attachment by which they were once bound to their people.

The keynote of the modern alliance is to be found in the writings of Lalor, one of the least known, but certainly not one of the least important of the seditious writers of 1848. He taught that a national movement in Ireland would never succeed, unless it were united with a movement for expelling all loyal owners from the soil. 'The reconquest of our liberties,' he wrote, 'would be incomplete and worthless without the reconquest of our lands, and could not on its own means be possibly achieved: while the reconquest of our land would involve the other, and could possibly, if not easily, be achieved. . . . I selected as the mode of reconquest, to refuse payment of rent, and resist process of ejectment.' 'Our means, whether of moral agitation, military force, or moral insurrection, are impotent against the English Government, which is beyond their reach; but resistless against the English garrison who stand here, scattered and isolated, girdled round by a mighty people.' 'The land question contains, and the legislative question does not contain, the materials from which victory is manufactured.' 'You can never count again on the support of the country peasantry in any shape or degree on the question of repeal. Their interest in it was never ardent, nor was it native and spontaneous, but forced and factitious.' 'In Ireland unluckily there is no direct and general State tax, payment of which might be refused and resisted.' Rent is the one impost which can be so resisted; a struggle against it is the one means of enlisting the great mass of the farming classes in the army of sedition, and kindling in them a strain of genuine passion. 'There is but one way alone, and that is to link repeal to some other question, like a railway carriage to the engine, some question possessing the

intrinsic strength which repeal wants, and strong enough to carry both itself and repeal together; and such a question there is in the land. . . . Repeal had always to be dragged.' 'There is a wolf dog at this moment, in every cabin throughout the land, nearly fit to be untied, and he will be savager by-and-by. For repeal, indeed, he will never bite, but only bay, but there is *another* matter to settle between us and England.' 'The absolute ownership of the lands of Ireland is vested of right in the people of Ireland. . . . All titles to land are invalid not conferred or confirmed by them.'[1]

These doctrines were at once adopted by a much abler man. John Mitchel, who wasted in barren and mischievous struggles against the Governments, both of his own country and of the United States, talents that might have placed him almost in the foremost rank of the writers of his time, embraced the creed of Lalor with all the passion of his hard, fierce, narrow, but earnest nature, and he has contributed probably more than any other past politician, to form the type of modern Irish agitation. Speaking of his relations to Smith O'Brien, who aspired to a purely Irish Government, but who steadily opposed every form of robbery and outrage, Mitchel wrote: 'Our difference is, not as to theories of government, but as to possibilities of action; not as to the political ideal we should fight for, but by what appeals to men's present passions and interests, we could get them to fight at all. I am convinced, and have long been, that the mass of the Irish people cannot be roused in any quarrel, less than social revolution, destruction of landlordism, and denial of all tenure and title derived from English sovereigns.'[2]

[1] Lalor's writings on the land question are chiefly to be found in a paper called the *Irish Felon*. A great portion of them has been reprinted by Mr. Bagenal in his very valuable work, the *American Irish*, pp. 153–197, where the connection between Lalor's teaching and the subsequent land agitation is clearly shown. See, too, the interesting account of Lalor's teaching in Sir Gavan Duffy's *Four Years of Irish History*, pp. 414–481; and also a lecture, *On the Continuity of the Irish Revolutionary Movement*, by Mr. Brougham Leech (Professor of Jurisprudence and International Law in the University of Dublin). In the *Report of the Special Commission of* 1888, the connection between the land movement and the Fenian movement has been clearly recognised and abundantly illustrated.

[2] Dillon's *Life of Mitchel*, ii. 130. Mitchel adds: 'This kind of social revolution he [O'Brien] would resist with all his force, and patriotic citizens could do nothing less than hang him, though with much reluctance.' 'I for my part believed,' said Mr. Healy in one of his speeches, 'with John Mitchel, that the land system of Ireland is the nerve centre,

It was on these lines, that a great agrarian organisation was created, connected with, and largely paid by the Fenian conspirators, and intended to accomplish the double task of drawing into sedition, by appeals to self-interest, multitudes who were indifferent to its political aspects, and of breaking down the influence and authority of the class who were the most powerful supporters of the Union and the connection. A period of severe agricultural depression, some real abuses, and much modern English legislation assisted it, and the conspiracy soon succeeded in establishing, over a great part of Ireland, what has been truly termed an 'elaborate and all-pervading tyranny,'[1] accompanied by perhaps as much mean and savage cruelty, and supported by as much shameless and deliberate lying, as any movement of the nineteenth century. It would be difficult to exaggerate the extent to which it has demoralised the Irish people, and destroyed their capacity for self-government, by making cupidity the main motive of political action, and by diffusing the belief, that outrage, and violence, and dishonest and tyrannical combinations against property, contracts and individual liberty, are the natural means of attaining political ends. A parliamentary representation, subsidised by the same men who paid agrarian conspiracy and dynamite outrages,[2] supported it; and the Fenian leaders, without abandoning any of their ulterior objects, consented, after a short period of hesitation, to make the attainment of an Irish Parliament their proximate end, under the persuasion, that, in the existing state of Ireland, the establishment of such a Parliament would be in effect to confer legislative powers on the National League, and that it would furnish the conspiracy with an immensely improved vantage ground, or leverage, for working

is the ganglion, is the heart of British rule; and I believe that if you want to break the British rule, you must strike it through the land system and landlordism.' (*Report of the Special Commission*, 1888, p. 107.)

[1] *Report of the Special Commission*, p. 53.

[2] 'We are of opinion that the evidence proves that the Irish National League of America has been since the Philadelphia Convention, April 25, 1883, directed by the Clan-na-Gael, a body actively engaged in promoting the use of dynamite for the destruction of life and property in England. It has been further proved, that while the Clan-na-Gael controlled and directed the Irish National League of America, the two organisations concurrently collected sums amounting to more than 60,000*l.* for a fund called the Parliamentary Fund, out of which payments have been made to Irish members of Parliament.' (Ibid. p. 118.)

out its ultimate designs.[1] In this manner, the old social type over a large part of the kingdom, has been broken up, and ninety years after the Union, the great majority of the Irish members are leagued together for its overthrow.

That no Parliament, resembling Grattan's Parliament, could ever again exist in Ireland, had long become evident, and the men who most strongly opposed the Union in 1800, speedily perceived it. As early as 1805, Foster himself warned the Imperial House of Commons that the introduction of the Catholics into Irish political life, might be followed by a struggle for the repeal of the Union; that the Parliament which a Catholic democracy would demand, would not be one in which loyalty or property would prevail, and that in the struggle, the seeds of separation might be sown, and Ireland might one day be torn from her connection with Britain.[2] Plunket, who was as friendly to the Catholics, as he had once been hostile to the Union, was equally emphatic. He spoke with indignation of those who, having themselves rebelled against the Irish Parliament in 1798, made the abolition of that Parliament a pretext for a new rebellion, and he implored Parliament to beware of any step that could paralyse the Union settlement, and thereby shake the foundations of public security, and the connection between the two countries.[3] Grattan, it is true, took a somewhat different view. In 1810, the grand jury, the common council, and a meeting of the freeholders and freemen of Dublin, passed resolutions deploring the effects of the Union, and they requested Grattan, as one of the representatives of the city, to present a petition for its repeal. Grattan answered, that he would present their petition; that he shared their sentiments, but that no movement should be ever undertaken for the repeal of the Union, without

[1] The following extract from one of the Clan-na-Gael circulars, Dec. 18, 1885, states very clearly the policy of that body. 'While our objects lie far beyond what may be obtained by agitation, a national Parliament is an object which we are bound to attain by any means offered. The achievement of a national Parliament gives us a footing upon Irish soil; it gives us the agencies and instrumentalities of a Government *de facto* at the very commencement of the Irish struggle. It places the government of the land in the hands of our friends and brothers. It removes the Castle's rings, and gives us what we may well express as the plant of an armed revolution. From this standpoint the restoration of Parliament is part of our programme.' (*Report of the Special Commission*, pp. 116, 117. See, too, the remarks of the judges, p. 23.)

[2] *Parl. Debates*, iv. 1003, 1004.

[3] Plunket's *Life*, i. 212; ii. 256, 257.

'a decided attachment to our connection with Great Britain, and to that harmony between the two countries, without which the connection cannot last,' and unless it was called for, and supported by the nation [1]—a phrase in which he undoubtedly included the Protestants of Ireland, and the great body of her landed gentry. Among English opponents of the Union, Fox was conspicuous. In 1806, on the occasion of a vote for a monument to Lord Cornwallis, he expressed his belief, that the Union, 'with all the circumstances attending it,' was one of the most disgraceful acts in English history, but he also disclaimed any wish or intention of repealing it, for, 'however objectionable the manner, under all the circumstances, under which it was carried, it is impossible to remedy any objections which might have originally existed against it, by its repeal.' [2] Grey, who, of all Englishmen, took the foremost part in opposing the Union, lived to be Prime Minister, during the early stages of the repeal agitation of O'Connell; he drew up the King's speech of 1833, which pledged the Sovereign and the Whig party to employ all the means in their power to preserve and strengthen the legislative Union, as being 'indissolubly connected with the peace, security, and welfare' of the nation, and he expressed his own emphatic opinion, which was echoed by the leaders of both the great parties in the State, that its repeal 'would be ruin to both countries.'

The attitude of classes on this question has been even more significant than the attitude of individuals. The descendants of the members of Grattan's Parliament; the descendants of the volunteers; the descendants of that section of the Irish people among whom, in 1799 and 1800, the chief opposition to the Union was displayed, are now its staunchest supporters. Grattan was accustomed to look to Protestant Ulster as the special centre of the energy, intelligence, and industry of Ireland,[3] and since the Union its industrial supremacy has become still more decisive. The prediction so often made in the Union discussions, that in Ireland, as in Scotland, the declining importance of the political capital would be accompanied or followed by the rise of a great industrial capital, has

[1] Grattan's *Miscellaneous Works*, pp. 316–318.

[2] *Parl. Debates*, vi. 127, 128, 174.

[3] See Grattan's *Life*, v. 214.

come true; but the Glasgow of Ireland has not arisen, as was expected, in Catholic Munster, but in Protestant Ulster. The great city of Belfast and those counties in Ulster, which are now the strongest supporters of the legislative Union, form also the portion of Ireland which, in all the elements of industry, wealth, progress, intelligence and order, have risen to the greatest height, and have attained to the full level of Great Britain; and, unless some political disaster drags them down to the level of the remainder of Ireland, their relative importance must steadily increase. The Presbyterians of the North, who, during the greater part of the eighteenth century, formed the most dangerous element of discontent in Ireland, have been fully conciliated; but the great majority of the Catholic population, whose ancestors in 1800 had accepted the Union with indifference or with favour, are now arrayed against it. Yet even in the Catholic body, the landed gentry, a majority of the Catholics in the secular professions, and an important and guiding section of the Catholic middle class, are as much attached to the Union as the Protestants; while the peace of the country has been mainly kept during its many agitations by a great constabulary force largely drawn from the ranks of the Catholic peasantry. The utter feebleness of every attempted insurrection, and the impotence of all political agitation that is not united with an agrarian struggle, and largely subsidised from abroad, show clearly how much hollowness and unreality there is in Irish sedition.

Powerful influences at the same time have been strengthening the Union. Steam has brought Ireland vastly nearer to England; has made her much more dependent on England; and has removed some of the chief administrative objections to the Union. The chances, both of foreign invasion and of successful insurrection, have greatly diminished. The whole course and tendency of European politics is towards the unification, and not the division of states. The relative position of the two islands has essentially changed, the population of Great Britain having trebled since the Union, while that of Ireland has probably not risen more than 200,000 or 300,000. Economically, too, the free-trade system has greatly lessened the dependence of England upon Ireland, while it has left

England the only market for Irish cattle. Imperial credit at the same time has acquired an increasing importance in the material development of Ireland. Commercial, financial, and social relations between the two countries have immensely multiplied. Disqualifications and disabilities of all kinds have, with scarcely an exception, been abolished. English professional life in all its branches is crowded with Irishmen, many of them in the foremost ranks, while Irishmen have of late years probably borne a more considerable proportionate part than the inhabitants of any other portion of the Empire, in the vast spheres of ambition and enterprise, which Imperial policy has thrown open in India and the colonies.

These last advantages, it is true, though of priceless value, have not been without their shadow, for they have contributed, with causes that are more purely Irish, to a marked and lamentable decline in the governing faculty of the upper orders in Ireland. No one who has followed with care the history of Ireland in the eighteenth century, and especially the part played by the Irish gentry when they organised the volunteers in 1779, and the yeomanry in 1798, will question the reality of this decline; nor is it difficult to explain it. All the influences of late years have tended, fatally and steadily, to close the paths of public life and of healthy influence, in three provinces of Ireland, to honourable, loyal, and intelligent men, and the best and most energetic have sought—not without success—in other lands a sphere for their talents.

With a diminished population, material prosperity has at last arrived, and the standard of comfort has been greatly raised. Of ordinary crime there is very little, and although agrarian conspiracy has never been more rife, it may at least be said that the savage and unpunished murders which have at all times accompanied it, have in the present generation become less numerous. But the political condition has certainly not improved, and the difficulty of Irish government has not diminished. The elementary conditions of national stability, of all industrial and political prosperity, are in few countries more seriously impaired. The Union has not made Ireland either a loyal or an united country. The two nations that inhabit it still remain distinct. Political leadership has largely passed into

hands to which no sane and honourable statesman would entrust the task of maintaining law, or securing property, or enforcing contracts, or protecting loyal men, or supporting in times of difficulty and danger the interests of the Empire. At the same time, through the dissolution or enfeeblement of the chief influences on which the connection of the two countries has hitherto depended, English statesmen are confronted with one of the gravest and most difficult of all political problems. It is that of creating, by a wide diffusion and rearrangement of landed property, a new social type, a new conservative basis, in a disaffected and disorganised nation.

But of all the anticipations held out in 1800, none has been so signally falsified as the prediction that the Union would take Irish affairs out of the domain of English faction. There has scarcely been a period since its enactment, in which Irish questions or Irish votes have not been made the chief weapons in party conflicts; and with the appearance in the Imperial Parliament of a separate Irish party, ostentatiously indifferent to the great interests of the Empire, the evil has been immensely aggravated. Its effects have most assuredly not been confined to Ireland. It has produced coalitions and alliances, to which the worst periods of English party politics in the eighteenth century can afford no adequate parallel; apostasies and transformations so flagrant, so rapid, and so shameless, that they have sunk the level of public morals, and the character and honour of public men, to a point which had scarcely been touched in England since the evil days of the Restoration or the Revolution.

There is no fact in modern history more memorable than the contrast between the complete success with which England has governed her great Eastern Empire, with more than 200,000,000 inhabitants, and her signal failure in governing a neighbouring island, which contains at most about 3,000,000 disaffected subjects. Few good judges will doubt that the chief key to the enigma is to be found in the fact that Irish affairs have been in the very vortex of English party politics, while India has hitherto lain outside their sphere, and has been governed by upright and competent administrators, who looked only to the well-being of the country. The lessons which

may be drawn from the Irish failure are many and valuable. Perhaps the most conspicuous is the folly of conferring power where it is certain to be misused, and of weakening, in the interests of any political theory or speculation, those great pillars of social order, on which all true liberty and all real progress ultimately depend.

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